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An Exploratory Study of the Perspectives of Teachers
on the Unionization of One Charter Management Organization

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

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June 2018

An Exploratory Study of the Perspectives of Teachers
on the Unionization of One Charter Management Organization

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by

Justin McClinton

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First I have to thank the six teachers that were thoughtful enough to take the time to be interviewed for this project. These dedicated teachers work in some of the toughest neighborhoods in one of our nation's greatest cities. They accept this responsibility graciously and work tirelessly to provide their students with the best education possible. Without their perspectives this project would not have been possible. This project will contribute to the continued effort to improve education within inner-city schools. Along with these teachers, I have to express gratitude to my dissertation committee.

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ABSTRACT

An Exploratory Study of the Perspectives of Teachers on the Unionization of One Charter Management Organization

by

Justin McClinton

This dissertation was an exploratory study of the perspectives of teachers who were knowledgeable about the effort to unionize one charter management organization (CMO) within the larger Chicago metropolitan area. Current trends in charter schools indicate high turnover amongst teachers, with contributing factors including workload (longer school days and school years), as well as a fast-paced culture of high expectations within the schools. An increasing number of charter schools nationally have unions. Organizing efforts have occurred in major U.S. cities, such as Chicago, Philadelphia, and Sacramento (Loewus, 2017). The primary source of data for this study were interviews conducted with six teachers who had been teaching for more than seven years and were knowledgeable about, and active in, the effort to organize teachers within a three-school charter management organization (CMO). All of the teachers had spent the majority of their careers in primarily Black, majority low-income schools. The interviews were conducted in Summer 2017, at the close of the academic year following a vote for union representation (2014-2015). Secondary sources of data included state collected school performance data and the documents related to collective bargaining were examined. The findings of this study reveal similarities in teachers' views with respect to reasons for unionization. The results were discussed in light of previous research and implications for

practice, including a focus on the tension between structure and flexibility.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In many states, teachers working in charter schools are faced with an overwhelming workload, which has been shown to lead to high rates of teacher turnover. Some charter organizations have accepted high levels of turnover as a byproduct of their demanding mission. This mission generally requires that teachers forego being a part of a teachers' union. The understanding is that these schools, often run by charter management organizations (CMOs), facilitate fair labor contracts for their teachers. CMOs are defined as "non-profit organizations that manage multiple charter schools with a home office offering centralized support" (Torres, 2016, p. 892). In Torres' estimation, CMOs now operate about one third of all charter schools in the U.S.

Some charter teachers believe their organizations place an extra burden upon them in their professional roles. Because of the wages they are paid, the time they are expected to work, and the limited resources they are allocated, many charter teacher believe they are set up for failure (Torres, 2016). Coupled with a general lack of job security compared to their public school counterparts this creates stress related to their role as teachers (Conley & You, 2016). Several charter teachers around the country have sought union representation in order address their work related issues. Teachers working at three charter high schools, managed by a CMO, located in the greater Chicago metropolitan area began a heated unionization effort in 2015. They faced opposition from the administration in the charter network, which forced teachers to hold a formal vote amongst themselves in order to determine whether union representation would be

incorporated or not. The teachers' union effort was successful and they began working under their first interim contract during the 2016-2017 school year. This study sought to chronicle that effort through the lens of teacher leaders who were knowledgeable about (a) the effort to unionize and (b) the processes and effects of the recent union effort.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers in charter schools face several issues relating to wage, time management (i.e. work-life balance), and resource allocation. As noted, charter teachers are often paid less than their public school counterparts. This pay difference can occur for several reasons; one being that the teacher in the charter school might lack certification, experience, and/or a formal teacher-training program. The hiring of such teachers allows for greater flexibility as far as those selected to teach in charter schools, as well as management's ability to control wages. Many teachers in charter schools are new college graduates and/or those with generally less than five years of teaching experience. This typically young teaching core also struggles with time management and work-life balance.

The problem is not an issue of lack of experience, as many teachers would argue, but instead a structural problem that lies in the expectations thrust upon this group. Such teachers are often required to "work longer school days and school years" (p. 892) and are also expected to participate in some form of extracurricular activity (Torres, 2016). Teachers working in charter schools, for example, may be forced to forego lunch or their planning periods in order to meet these high demands. Teacher burnout has become a significant problem in charter schools, with average turnover rates estimated at 30% and

in some schools as high as 50% of teachers leaving each year (Torres, 2016). While some degree of turnover is desirable in order to deal with mismatch between teachers and schools, the levels of turnover in some charter schools is leaning toward instability (Miron & Applegate, 2007, p.10).

Within charter schools, resource allocation can also create for significant teacher burden. Teachers working in schools serving predominantly low socio-economic status (SES) students are often forced to foot the bill for many of their class tools. This issue can be particularly challenging because as noted earlier, most of these teachers (at often beginning levels) are already receiving relatively low wages compared to their public school counterparts. Furthermore, wages and resource allocation are often left to the executives at the CMO to decide. The CMO might handle these matters like a private negotiation; and for those teachers in non-unionized charter schools, teachers will find they have little to no say in the matter. Unlike their unionized counterparts, where union bargainers negotiate teacher compensation, charter teachers may have no platform for fair negotiation. They are forced to trust the executives with determining fair wages and benefits for them (Conley, Gould, Muncey, White, 2001). A lack of employment structure has left teachers feeling like these charter organizations have not kept up their "end of the bargain." This shortcoming has led charter teachers to lobby for collective bargaining despite what is often seen as a contentious relationship between charter schools and teacher unions. Indeed, the influence of unionization in general and teacher unions specifically appears precarious and some would argue is in decline within the teaching industry at large (Shelton, 2018). According to recent reports, of the 6,900

charter schools in the U.S. approximately one in 10 have unions. However, increases in organizing efforts have occurred in major U.S. cities, such as Chicago, Philadelphia, and Sacramento (Loewus, 2017). According to Loewus, Chicago, "a labor organizing stronghold, broadly speaking--has seen quite a few successful organizing efforts and is, many say, the epicenter of charter-organizing activity"; and about one-fourth of the 130 charter schools there are unionized.

This study explored the perspectives of teachers in a three-school charter network (CMO) within the larger Chicago metropolitan area in regards to (a) the effort to unionize and (b) the processes and effects of the recent unionization effort. This study sought to understand why these teachers chose collective bargaining as the remedy to their perceived issues. This is a set of questions that should receive consideration as part of discussions about staffing charter schools and improving the stability of the work force in order to better serve the needs of students.

This research is structured along the following research questions:

1. What are study participants' descriptions of the work related issues that led them to seek unionization?
2. What are study participants' descriptions of the facilitators and challenges to the union effort?
3. Given this information, what steps can teacher organizers take to create conditions for successful collective bargaining in charter schools?

Significance of the Study

There are several useful implications to derive from this exploratory study. The

three charter high schools within "City Prep" (a pseudonym) CMO have a high level of visibility, and their teachers' decisions regarding unionization may be influential on charter schools serving similar students in large American cities. For example, City Prep has sought to expand their network into other US locations. This union effort in Chicago then would seem to have not only an effect on this organization but perhaps other large CMOs within the U.S.

In addition, the charter teacher labor force is often a voice unheard, and union influence is seeing resurgence thanks to the charter teacher demand for employment representation (Loewus, 2017). With the implementation of Common Core curriculum, for example, and the continued debate on how to measure the effectiveness of teachers, the voice of successful long-serving charter teachers is one that needs to be heard.

Those working in large city charter schools often serve the poorest populations (Buras, 2015; Torres, 2016). These teachers are charged with the difficult task of educating students while often experiencing a great deal of resistance from the various stakeholders involved (i.e. students, parents, administrators, politicians and investors). It is not surprising, then, that in many schools teacher turnover continues to be a concern. In his article, questioning whether the work of charter teachers is "sustainable," Torres (2016) noted, "Teacher turnover is an ... important and poorly understood barrier to the growth and quality of CMO schools" (p. 893). While much of this attrition within charter schools is voluntary, there is little evidence to support the notion that it can all be explained by mismatch. Working conditions account for a large part of why many of these teachers choose to leave their schools. High turnover can be quite expensive,

considering the cost of recruiting and training (Stuit and Smith, 2010).

Key Terms

The following introduce the main themes of the study.

Charter Management Organization-A "non-profit organization that manages multiple charter schools with a home office offering centralized support" (Torres, 2016, p. 892)

Charter School Autonomy-"Funded with public dollars charter schools have more autonomy than traditional schools. Many require teachers to work longer hours than most union contracts allow. And teachers there are at will employees, meaning they can be dismissed for any cause" (Loewus, 2017).

Deprivation of Decision Making-Discrepancy between a teacher's actual and desired rate of participation (Alutto & Belasco, 1973).

Militancy over Professional Control-Militancy directed to specific ends related to workplace control, such as preparation time and teacher evaluation procedures. Strategies to achieve these ends could include strikes, performing a job action, and continuing work with formal and informal negotiations (Bacharach, Bamberger & Conley, 1990).

Occupational Militancy- Militancy that displays a pattern "rooted in common occupational norms and experiences" (Fox & Wince, 1976, p. 48). Its three forms include conflict activity, traditional activity, and political activity.

Role Stresses- Role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload that have been posited to increase teachers' dissatisfaction and intentions to leave (Conley & You, 2009).

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The literature for this study has been organized in several sections.

This section begins with a brief overview of recent events involving labor negotiation within the Chicago's Public School System, followed by an overview of recent studies examining effects of charter school unionization on student performance. In the rest of the section are summaries of literature pertinent to the subject of this research encompassing a sampling of empirical studies related to charter teacher labor conditions including expectations, burnout, and turnover. Teacher's reactions to these conditions are also explored through a review of literature exploring teacher militancy. Along with militancy, studies of teachers' perspectives on union negotiation are also explored.

The above theoretical areas helped guide the analysis of the data used in this study.

Background on Labor Relations for Schools In the City: A Recent History 2010-2018

On September 10, 2012 the Chicago Teacher's Union (CTU) began a strike. This was the first strike for CTU since 1987. Shelton (2018) detailed developments leading up to the strike and the decision to strike as follows:

The CTU had expressed its demands in a report released in February 2012 called "The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve." The report outlined the need for smaller class sizes, wraparound services for students, professional development,

and an end to institutional racism in Chicago schools. In addition, the teachers sought a modest pay raise, limits on student standardized test scores in teacher evaluations, and improved physical spaces in which to teach. With an impasse on the horizon, the union got 90 percent of all teachers (and 98 percent of those who submitted a ballot) to authorize a strike. On the strike's first day, 35,000 teachers and their supporters marched through downtown in a massive show of solidarity (Shelton, 2018, p. 33).

As a necessary requirement of the strike, teachers were required to enter contract negotiations. They sought better wages, benefits, and protection for teachers that would be laid off due to the looming closure of fifty schools. Amid labor negotiations many of these teachers would call attention to more systemic social problems within education. They called for less onus on high-stakes testing, increased funding for enrichment programs (art, music, and physical education), and an end to the attacks of corporate financiers (privatizers) on the public school system. This final point of contention was a direct "shot" at the city's support of charter school growth and the stakeholders that operate charter management organizations (CMOs). While the doors to public schools were being shuttered, the city had planned to open several new charter schools. These schools remain a topic of heated debate, as CTU's leadership does not believe public money should be used to fund charter schools.

While most of the students in the city were left without access to education until the conclusion of the strike on September 19th 2012, for those attending charter schools it had been business as usual. Like the students, teachers within charter schools were also

seemingly unaffected by the union effort. Charter schools teachers can rely on the non-profit charter management organizations they work for to handle all of their labor contracts. The expectation is that these contracts will be fair for both the organization and the teachers they employ. In the immediate years following the public school teachers' strike, certain charter teachers in the city began to lobby for union representation. Due to the contentious relationship that exists between charter school leaders/management and teachers' unions, charter school leaders opposed incorporating collective bargaining into their networks. The growing number of charter teachers seeking to unionize has created an impasse between them and the charter school leaders. Charter teachers have cited improving their ability to best serve their students as a motivating factor for unionization. Early studies on the effects of charter teacher unionization on student performance have been largely exploratory and provide good frame for future work.

Effects of Charter School Unionization on Student Performance

Data has shown that about 12% of all charter schools are operating under a collective bargaining agreement. 6% of these charter schools have unionized teachers because their district requires it. The other 6% of charter schools that engage in collective bargaining do so because the charters founders wanted it or because the teachers had successfully lobbied for a union (Price, 2011). In the study, Price and his research team examined the collective bargaining agreements at 17 unionized charter schools. The research also conducted interviews with teacher, principals, CMO operators, school lawyers and other charter school professionals. In order to establish a comparison point for the charter school union contracts

the researchers examined the traditional public school district contract in each charter school's local district, reviewed contract provisions from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) database of more than 100 contracts from the largest districts in each state (p.6)

Based on a metric established by prior researchers, Price and his team determined that the charter school collective bargaining agreements were on average more flexible when compared to traditional school collective bargaining agreements. They discovered that charter schools that create their own contracts could avoid practices such as “last hired, first fired” and compensation structures that don’t reward teachers based on merit. In effect, they could provide “teachers with basic work place protections” without compromising charter school values" (p. 7).

Charter school contracts also generally shortened the time it took to terminate teachers and included provisions to limit teacher workload. The charter school contracts also formalized extended school days and greater work flexibility. The researchers discovered that overall, these charter school bargaining agreements “tend to create mechanisms for teacher involvement in school decision-making by providing more formalized routes for teacher input.” This is in line with the desire of many charter teachers to have a voice within their organization. While these provisions seem like a solid middle ground, Price also found charter leaders that were skeptical as to whether charter schools and teacher unions could co-exist effectively.

The researchers point out that some charter leaders believe that charter teacher unions “can have a chilling effect on dialogue between school leaders and teachers."

This effectively stifles lines of communication between charter leaders and charter teachers because all conversations in regards to employment (i.e. wage, hours and terms and employment) must be done through a third party. The leaders also expressed the fear that the “thin” contracts could become more restrictive in the future. Price and his team discovered that a little more than half of these unionized charter schools in the county are located in Wisconsin, Ohio and California. Recent studies in California yielded mixed results on the impact charter teacher unionization might have on student performance.

Hart and Sojourner (2014) conducted a quantitative study examining the student performance on standardized test from 2003-2012 in several California charter schools. They report that as of 2010-2011 there were 5200 charter schools in the country, over 900 of them being in California. Their data set included 1,126 schools in total. 985 schools were not unionized, 99 were always unionized, and 42 had unionized between 2003-2012 (p.7). The students captured by the study ranged from 2nd to the 11th grade. By placing the standardized test scores (math, reading science and history) from these charter schools under statistical analysis the researchers were able to determine that the existence of a teacher union generally had no effect on student performance. For those 42 charter schools that did transition from non-union to union, the researchers noticed a drop in student performance during the initial period of unionization “but [student performance] seems to rebound to previous levels within a few years (p.15).” They believe this could be due to the temporary distraction caused by the union process. In 2017, a study was conducted that built on Hart and Sojourner’s work, which yielded slightly different results.

Matsudaira and Patterson (2017) used a “slightly different methodology” than Hart and Sojourner (2014) in order carry out their quantitative study (p.41). They first discovered that 291 charter schools (over 25%) in California had unionized at some point prior to 2013. The data they placed under statistical analysis included standardized test data for California students in grades 2-11 over the course of a 10-year period (2003-2013). While they are in line with the previous researchers discovery that unionization had no effect on student’s performance in English. Matsudaira and Patterson showed that unions have a positive effect on student’s math achievement (p. 45). They suggest that more research should be done to concretize these findings considering “the growing number of unionized charter schools in areas like Illinois or New York, where richer teacher personnel and student level data are available.” With this valuable quantitative work, further qualitative study on these unionized charter schools will be helpful in order to better understand the best working conditions for teacher professionals.

Expectations, Burnout, and Turnover in Charter Management Organizations (CMOs)

In his analysis of charter management organizations (CMOs), Torres (2016) noted that many of these organizations are concentrated in urban areas and serve diverse student populations, i.e., "larger percentages of Black and Hispanic students, [and students in poverty] compared with other schools in their districts" (p. 892). As discussed in Chapter One, CMOs are non-profit organizations that manage multiple charter schools, comprising an estimated one third of all charter schools nationally (Torres, p. 892.)

Torres noted several characteristics of some CMO charter schools that have been associated with significant student success. These include

longer school days and school years, a culture of high expectations for teachers and students, frequent teacher observation/coaching, and school-wide disciplinary systems (e.g., merits/demerits or "paycheck" systems) to reward or punish ... student behaviors that must [in turn] be frequently enforced and monitored by teachers (p. 892).

However, these same characteristics incorporating high expectations for teachers and students may also contribute to teacher burnout and intentions to leave these schools.

In several studies and review articles, Torres has examined the relationship between particular work conditions and teachers' intention to leave in charter schools (Torres, 2016; Torres & Oluwole, 2015). Citing several studies, Torres and Oluwole stated, for example, that evidence

suggests that many charter schools require longer working hours for teachers compared to TPSs [traditional public schools] that are bound by union rules . . . particularly in high-performing CMOs. For example, empirical studies attribute a longer school day and school year as significantly related to CMO success.

They pointed out that case studies of CMO schools indicate that teachers can work 60 or more hours in some CMOs. They also noted that in such settings management flexibility in hiring and firing teachers and the "ability to offer a longer school day and school year are considered crucial for charter school success, [explaining] some of the resistance to unionization in charter schools." However, they also observed "long working hours and

an overwhelming workload can . . . contribute to high teacher turnover in CMOs'." Citing a study of one large CMO (i.e., Torres, 2014), Torres and Oluwole pointed to case study evidence to suggest that more teachers who considered their workload unmanageable left the organization than did teachers who did not find the workload manageable.

In broadening the analysis to teacher turnover as it is related to collective bargaining in charter school, Torres and Oluwole (2015) examined how teacher turnover within charter schools has been affected by the collective bargaining agreements (CBA). According to their state-by-state examination, forty-two states and the District of Columbia have charter laws, but Iowa is the only state that requires charter teachers be a part of their district CBAs. An emerging group of charter teachers (which they estimated to be at 12%) do engage in collective bargaining. Taking this percentage into the consideration, the researchers examined U.S. states that contained several broad legal approaches to collective bargaining within charter schools including: (a) public schools that have converted charters remain under their original collective bargaining structure, as established by the district and (b) Newly created schools (non-conversion) have the choice to use the CBA of the district the school is located within. In the states where this option existed, all charter schools are treated similarly and were able to bypass the district CBA entirely if they saw fit to do so. Even within these variations, there were at least six sub-variations depending on the state in which the school is located.

Torres and Oluwole (2015) described the goal of their examination of state variation as a way to describe how collective bargaining differs by state and for different charter schools. By doing so, they were able to identify the laws that can be beneficial in

improving teacher satisfaction within charter schools. As they advised,

Charters in most states could (legally speaking) follow the path of Green Dot [a CMO] to regularly allow teachers to have more voice in policies and procedures related to their satisfaction, thereby, potentially increasing the longevity of their teaching staff. At a minimum, more charter schools and policymakers should be aware of the possibilities and examples within and outside of their states, as well as the larger need to address teacher voice, satisfaction, and turnover in charters. (p. 523)

While collective bargaining laws can in some instances be cumbersome, the authors maintained that despite the existing resistance within the charter landscape, collective bargaining can also be beneficial for trying to improve charter teacher job satisfaction. Torres and Oluwole identified ways to improve teacher pay as an area that requires more in-depth empirical study for policy and practical applications. The majority of states with charter schools laws allow for the schools to negotiate CBAs separately from the district CBAs. They acknowledged Green Dot as one example of a CMO that allows teachers to have more voice in policies and procedures. This voice may potentially increase the longevity of their existing teaching staff. Torres and Oluwole's examination provides an unusual level of analytic detail and recommendations for charter school managers and policymakers, advising them to be more aware about the examples within the landscape that are engaging in collective bargaining to address teacher voice, satisfaction, and turnover.

Professional Work Conditions and Turnover in Schools

A number of researchers have sought to relate work or organizational conditions of teachers to a variety of organizational outcomes including job satisfaction, commitment, militancy, and turnover. The research discussed in this section examines the relationship between work conditions and turnover; the next section addresses the relationship between organizational conditions and militancy. Presented in this section is a small sampling of studies that have addressed the work conditions-turnover relationship.

In 2011, Bascia and Rottman observed that teachers' working conditions continue to be problematic in U.S. schools, despite developments that have seemingly enhanced such conditions as the "legalization of collective bargaining .. growing attention to working conditions in collective agreements, [and] increased attention to teachers' opportunities for professional learning" and other developments. As they observed, "teachers continue to express concern and dissatisfaction through their union representatives and, especially, in the US, the exit of many credentialed teachers from teaching, particularly from poorly resourced, high-poverty schools (p. 788). Such observations are consistent with the idea in other literature that teaching is increasingly becoming less professionalized, a characterization that dates back to the work of Amitai Etzioni (1969). According to Etzioni, teachers (as well as social workers) were best characterized as semi-professionals or those who would not obtain the rights of full professionals in the workplace. This appears part of a societal trend whereby there is a danger that traditional professions such as accountancy are being accorded less than professional status and/or more subject to bureaucratic management and regulation.

The studies examined by Bascia and Rottman (2011) provide examples of investigations that attempt to pinpoint those professional working conditions that appear to be the most critical. As such, their analysis may provide a focus for intervening to improve teachers' working conditions in schools. They maintained, for example, that those teacher work conditions that are connected to student learning conditions comprises a promising direction for further research. Nonetheless, Bascia and Rottman argued that those work conditions teachers identify as critical to their work have been "persistently ignored by policy-makers and researchers" (p. 789) and that "it is remarkable how many of the working conditions that [have] troubled teachers over 100 years ago remain or recur as concerns" (p. 791).

One study examining teacher work conditions-teacher turnover focused on role stresses and attempted to identify which role stresses had the largest impact on affective work outcomes including intention to leave. Based on survey data with 178 teachers employed in four California high schools, Conley and You tested three models depicting different (direct and indirect) relationships between role stresses, satisfaction, commitment and intentions to leave. Conley and You (2009) examined three role stresses, role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload, and the extent to which they predicted teachers' intentions to leave. The authors also proposed that two affective work outcomes, satisfaction and commitment, intervened in the relationship between role stress and intentions to leave. The findings provided support for a model that posited a strong causal path from role ambiguity and role conflict to satisfaction, commitment and intentions to leave. Specifically, results indicated that the higher the perceptions of two

role stresses, role ambiguity and role conflict, the lower teachers' perceived satisfaction and their perceived commitment. Further, satisfaction and commitment mediated the relationship between role stresses and intentions to leave; and the greater the commitment and satisfaction, the lower the intentions to leave the school organization.

In a 2014 study, Torres interviewed 20 charter teachers across levels of experience (Torres, 2014). Of the total sample of 20 teachers, 13 of them worked within a CMO. The teachers expressed varying degrees of desire for autonomy and control. He discovered that the CMO teachers expressed a high degree of autonomy in regards to the curriculum they teach. With this, they also expressed the desire to have a voice in the broader structural school policies outside of academic areas that might also affect student socialization. These individual teachers expressed a viewpoint on these matters that conflicted with the established “model” of organizational policy within their respective schools (p. 9). As a result, this model became a factor leading to dissatisfaction and in some cases the desire to leave. The source of dissatisfaction is tied to these teachers’ feelings that students were not being served well. The founding teachers within a charter school expected to have a voice in important school-wide decisions. These expectations are to be expected because these types of teachers respond to the increased responsibility with a sense of commitment and ownership; they are drawn to the opportunity to build a school from the ground up (Vasudeva and Gratik, 2002).

Considering teacher autonomy, then, is an important factor in the charter school movement. Because by some accounts CMO representation accounts for nearly one-third of all charter schools, the managerial structure comes from a home office that provides

centralized support with often-prescriptive policies and guidelines for teachers and administrators (Farrell, Wohlstetter, & Smith, 2012). Torres' (2014) contribution is to suggest that issues with autonomy can affect teacher turnover, and potentially teacher burnout, thereby also contributing to the de-professionalization of teachers. Charter schools, while appearing to offer more autonomy to teachers and thus being initially attractive to teachers may not result in offering that autonomy, thereby violating teachers' sense of themselves as professional employees. This observation raises an interesting point about the promise but not delivery of autonomy.

Teacher Militancy

A line of research that has emerged since the 1970s that appears relevant to the topic of teachers' views on unionism has addressed the topic of teacher militancy in public schools. This section provides a sampling of quantitative survey studies that have examined this topic.

In an early example, Alutto and Belasco (1973) examined militancy as one variable in a larger study of patterns of teacher participation in school decision-making. They suggested that deprivation of decision-making, which was indicated by a discrepancy between a teacher's actual and desired rate of participation, could explain, in part, the increase in militancy seen in the early 1970s. Such militancy, they indicated, could be attributed to "the desire of growing numbers of teachers to more active in the decision-making process within their school organizations" (p. 28). Their conceptual framework was rooted in the notion of professional-bureaucratic conflict, i.e., "the assumed conflict between the teacher's professional aspirations and the bureaucratically

organized school system" (p. 28). However, Alutto and Belasco (1973) also maintained that individual teachers--or groups of teachers--may vary in the amount of participation in decision making they desire in schools. For example, teachers with aspirations for advancement into master teacher positions may display a different pattern of desired participation than those who wish to enter administrative careers.

In a study of teachers in two districts in New York State, Alutto and Belasco (1973) used a survey instrument that asked teachers to report on the decision making they currently participated in and whether they desired to participate in 12 different areas (e.g., hiring new faculty members, establishing classroom disciplinary procedures, and facilities planning. Using these data, the authors examined the association between decisional deprivation--the difference between actual and desired participation--and such organizational outcomes including commitment, role conflict, and attitudes toward militant (union) action. Attitudes toward militant action were measured by asking teachers about their favorability toward strikes, unions, and collective bargaining. Interestingly, "decisionally deprived" teachers tended to be young males, whereas decisionally saturated teachers (i.e., those who wanted less decision making than they had) were primarily older females. Further, elementary school teachers tended to experience decisional saturation, and secondary teachers decisional deprivation. Moreover, with regards to militancy, the authors found that teachers who were most favorable toward militant activities were also those experiencing decisional deprivation.

Fox and Wince (1976) focused more extensively on the construct of militancy as opposed to other attitudinal aspects of teachers (such as participation in decision-

making). They examined the nature and determinants of militancy among teachers in a Midwestern city that had experienced strikes in its recent past. The authors developed a questionnaire assessing teachers' willingness to engage in three forms of what they termed *occupational militancy*, or militancy that displays a pattern "rooted in common occupational norms and experiences" (p. 48). Their questionnaire items dealt with three primary subsets of elements related to militancy, which they uncovered in a factor analysis of 15 items on the survey. These survey items asked teachers to indicate the extent to which they were willing to engage in particular activities indicative of militancy e.g., picketing school board meetings. The first subset, termed *conflict activity*, pertained to such things as striking, marching on the state capital and picketing schools and board meetings, and was the most overt and visible forms of militancy. The second, termed *traditional citizen activity* included signing and distributing petitions and writing letters were activities traditionally engaged in by American citizens with grievances. The third subset, termed *political activity*, related to political actions such as working for the election of particular legislators and board candidates.

The authors further found certain demographic characteristics to be related to a "uni-dimensional" militancy measure summing all fifteen items. Males were found to be more militant than females, a low level of militancy existed among the very newest teachers (with the relationship between age and militancy otherwise inversely related), and teachers with a master's degree were more militant than those without such a degree. In addition, militancy was positively associated with the teacher's grade level taught. Interestingly, the strong militancy among the younger teachers may have been

attributable to the "successes recorded by militant teachers [and union action in many] communities during the 1960s" (p. 58). As they stated, "teachers elsewhere have provided models for the channeling of unrest that may have seemed especially appropriate to younger teachers" (p. 58). However, the authors acknowledged that their analysis did not account for the school or the organizational context in which teachers act, the importance of which required further consideration.

Bacharach, Bamberger, and Conley's (1990) research, conducted 15 years later, differentiated between two aspects of teacher militancy in their analysis of public school unionism: (a) militancy directed at the economic welfare of their members; and (b) militancy directed at the rights and responsibilities of teachers as professionals in the workplace. Focusing on the second factor, teacher militancy regarding workplace control, the authors noted that predictors of such militancy were likely to involve characteristics of the work as well as characteristics of the individual. They used survey research and causal modeling to test three alternative models of the relationships among organizational integration variables (influence deprivation, rational promotion, and job feedback), demographic variables (age, geographic location and gender), affective work outcomes (role conflict, satisfaction with supervision) and the outcomes of militancy on work control issues. Militancy was measured by asking teachers what strategies they would be willing to use for specific ends related to workplace control, including preparation time and teacher evaluation procedures. Strategies teachers could select were placed on a continuum, and included (from more severe to least severe): strike, perform a job action, continue work with formal negotiations, continue work with informal negotiations, and

give in. The authors found support for a "direct integrative model" for elementary teachers and support for the "organizational model" for secondary school teachers.

Among their findings were, for elementary teachers, that (a) men were more likely than women to report themselves as being militant about control issues; and (b) organizational integration variables affected militancy on control issues indirectly, and affective work outcomes affected it directly. Their model for secondary teachers examined the influence of such organizational integration variables as well as a number of interactions between demographic variables and organizational variables. One finding was that affective work outcomes were associated with particular gender-based interactions. The authors concluded that "for both elementary and secondary teachers, the greater the role conflict, the lower the satisfaction with supervision and the greater the militancy" (p. 583), indicating that findings suggested that "militancy of this type is best understood as an outcome of the teachers' poor integration into the organizations in which they work" (p. 584).

Teachers' Perspectives on Unions/Conditions for Negotiation

A final area of research included (largely qualitative) studies that have addressed teachers' perceptions of unions, including conditions for successful negotiation. Bascia developed a line of research that has addressed such issues (e.g., Bascia, 1990) In an early study, she observed that "even with union membership an almost universal aspect of teachers' occupational identity...we know little about the role unions play in teachers' professional lives" (Bascia, 1990, p. 301). Observing that "local unions have varied markedly in strength and in the nature of the issues for which they campaign" (p. 301),

Bascia used qualitative interviewing of teachers and additional school and district personnel to explore teachers' perspectives on their working conditions and attitudes about unions. Bascia found these perceptions to be "neither simple nor consistent" (p. 303). She presented two cases of California high schools, Onyx Ridge and Rancho, derived from interviews with 16 to 24 teachers and others at both the school and district levels. In each school case study, she discussed the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school, the professional role of teachers at the school, the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the teachers' association, the extent to which membership in the union was tied to teachers' professional role (e.g., whether participation in activities was seen as crucial and productive), and whether the association was viewed as identifying issues important to teachers. Perceptions about the outcomes of the negotiations between the teachers' association and district were also addressed.

Among Bascia's (1990) findings was that for the school (Onyx Ridge) in which the union was not particular salient, school decision making routines did not typically involve site representatives, and teachers understood the association as distinct from their own conceptions of professionalism. In the school in which the union was viewed as legitimate and salient, however, these views differed: teachers considered the association central to teachers' work lives, the association was viewed as identifying issues important to teachers, and site representatives were viewed as being involved routinely in school decision making.

A final study provided by Conley et al. (2001) focused on teacher union negotiators' perceptions of an educational reform in response to a legislative mandate in

the state of Florida. The researchers asked union negotiators to describe the union's role (an affiliate of the AFT) in the adoption and development of a teacher compensation plan that paid teachers for performance. They documented positive aspects of the plan as well as problems with fairness and consistency in the guidelines that were set up. Finally, the researchers explored the conditions that need to be in place for successful negotiation of compensation to occur. These factors included the state mandate that created an impetus for the effort, the education of and communication with members, and principles that teachers and administration agreed to from the very beginning of negotiation. The study demonstrated the importance of including teachers' and union bargainers' perspectives in any examination of key educational reform proposals, such as teacher professional development and/or teacher performance pay. The teachers also expressed the desire to have a voice in the broader structural school policies outside of academic areas that might also affect student socialization.

Benefits of Turnover and the Counter-argument

One theoretical benefit to charter schools is that administrators would be able to fire bad teachers quicker than their public school counterparts. This argument in favor of teacher turnover is supported by the notion that a healthy level of attrition will prevent mismatch between the teacher and school. The amount of teachers that leave in any given year at public schools is between 11-14%. Charter schools average between 20-25% of teachers leaving every year (Miron & Applegate, 2010). Considering that charter teachers are younger on average than their public school counterparts, this gap may be smaller than the numbers directly suggest. In their study on charter teachers, Miron and

Applegate (2010) showed that 37% of the charter teachers in their six state sample was under 30 compared to just 11% of their public school counterparts (p.10). The difference in teacher attrition between charter and traditional schools is most likely influenced by the extremely high teacher turnover present in some charter schools. Union representation would not allow for such high turnover in a traditional public school. Functioning charter schools can make a compelling argument for slightly higher turnover but a teacher attrition rate >40% is unsustainable. Teacher attrition is generally higher in the upper grades (8th-12th). Teachers with high measured ability also have the highest probability of leaving. The school environment has most to do with the voluntary attrition. Some degree of attrition is expected, perhaps even beneficial but in order to prevent charter schools from losing quality teachers charter leaders must address issues within the work environment (Stuit and Smith, 2010).

Relationship of Literature Reviewed to Dissertation

Literature reviewed in this chapter has emphasized that CMO charter schools have been associated with significant student success owing to longer school days and school years, a culture of high expectations for teachers and students, frequent teacher observation/coaching, and school-wide disciplinary systems (e.g., merits/demerits or "paycheck" systems) to reward or punish ... student behaviors that must [in turn] be frequently enforced and monitored by teachers (Torres, p. 892).

However, these same characteristics incorporating high expectations for teachers and students may also contribute to teacher burnout and intentions to leave these schools.

Therefore, the interview protocol in this study included questions about the work environment in charter schools as well as reasons to unionize. The following chapter outlines the methodology for this study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

There is small body of literature on the perspectives of teachers in charter school regarding unionization. Therefore, my interest in examining teachers' perspectives in the present study is to explore the meaning charter teachers in one urban area attach to factors often associated with teachers and teacher unions. These factors are: personal background, teacher involvement in unionization, conditions for negotiation, and perspectives on unions in charter schools.

To meet these goals, the study examined the following research questions.

1. What are study participants' descriptions of the effort to unionize?
2. What are study participants' descriptions of the facilitators and challenges of unionization?
3. Given this information, what steps can teacher organizer take to create conditions for successful collective bargaining in charter schools?

The above research questions provided a framework in which the researcher was able to investigate teachers' perceptions of unionization using qualitative interviewing. As secondary sources of data, online information about the charter network collected by the state for public use and documents related to the charter networks collective bargaining agreement were also examined.

Sources of Data

Using a qualitative research design, six high school charter school teachers actively or formerly employed by a CMO in the larger Chicago metropolitan area were

selected using a purposive sampling population technique. Purposive sampling focused on selecting charter school teachers with experience in their charter school whose careers were long enough that they could offer reflection concerning a unionization effort as well as challenges and facilitators. Participants in the study were solicited individually to be involved in this study.

This study uses a qualitative research approach. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research is most often utilized when an interpretive research paradigm is adopted, which "assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality" (p. 8). The goal in such research is to uncover "the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13). Furthermore, within qualitative research, the researcher becomes him or herself the research instrument, as he or she can be responsive and adaptive during the conduct of the research (Kvale, 1996; Merriam, 2009). For example, the researcher can "process information (data) immediately, clarify and summarize material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15).

According to Kvale (1996) and Merriam (2009), a primary method and major source of data collection in qualitative research is interviews. Merriam (2009) outlines the conditions for interviewing that are essential to qualitative research.

Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate. . . . [Furthermore],

interviewing is sometimes the *only* way to get data (p. 88)

Interviewing allows the investigator to access the world of the interview through a "process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (DeMarrais in Merriam, 2009, p. 87). A conversation with a purpose, interviews allow the investigator to solicit a particular kind of information, i.e., what is "in and on someone else's mind" (Patton, cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 88).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this research. Such interview types occupy a middle ground between highly structured /standardized interviews and unstructured/ informal interviews. Their characteristics include questions used flexibly, specific data required from all respondents, and most of the interview guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored (Merriam, 2009). The interview format is appropriate because its purpose is to "find out...those things we cannot directly observe" (Patton, 2002, p 340-341); the goal of the semi-structured interview is to gain study participants' emic perspective on the organization of the union effort from beginning to end (Murphy, 1987). Additional goals were to explore interviewees' perspectives on the relationship between unions and charter schools as well as their reactions to how the City Prep (CMO) administration handled the effort.

The design of the study called for selecting and then conducting interviews with teacher leaders who were knowledgeable about, and active in, teachers' efforts to unionize within one charter management organization (CMO). Private, individual one-to-one interviews with each participant were scheduled and conducted, approximately one

hour in length, for the purposes of data collection related to teachers' meaning of unionization within teachers' professional role, the facilitators and challenges of such unionization, and steps that might be taken to create conditions for successful organizing. Using a formatted interview protocol of relevant questions (Appendix A), each participant was asked all questions from the guide to ensure comparison of teachers' perspectives (Merriam, 2009). Responses to the interviews were audio-recorded. Written field notes were collected during each interview to identify any emotionally salient response. The audio-recorded data was transcribed. The analysis of the data focused on the perceived reasons to organize within the charter network.

An initial pilot interview that was originally conducted in 2015 focused on one teacher's reasons for and perspective on teachers' pushing for unionization within their CMO network (McClinton, 2015). For reasons of access and permission, this interview participant was chosen because of his employment in a 3-school charter network with a city geographically close to the researcher and his leadership role. A summary of that interview appears in Appendix C. The interview guide utilized in the current study expanded on the interview guide used in the pilot study. Because the unionization effort was successful in a vote by teachers at the end of the 2014-2015 academic year, the interviews conducted for the present study conducted following the first collective bargaining contract in the 2015-2016 academic year added questions about conditions that need to be in place for unionization to successfully occur. The following section describes the study context, followed by the selection of interview participants and the interview in more detail, including the context of CMO and unionization vote.

The Study Context

The charter network in this study, City Prep Academies (a pseudonym) is a non-profit charter management organization (CMO) that operates a network of three all-male charter high schools (grades 9-12) in the larger metropolitan area of Chicago. The organization, founded in 2002, opened its first campus in one urban neighborhood on the city's southside in 2005. Each school currently employs approximately 25-30 teachers. Historically the first all-male public charter school in the United States is one of the three schools; it and the two other charter schools serve all African American males. The organization has received national recognition for all of its students in its graduating classes being accepted to college for several consecutive years. The Chicago Mayor, who has visited on multiple occasions, has praised the school. Its most recent publicity has centered on the attempt to unionize by many City Prep teachers. The schools enroll their based on a non-selective blind lottery, like all other charter schools in the city. As noted, the schools serve all African American males. The CMO receives significant financial support from private donors for its operation (ex. \$1,000,000 from an anonymous donor in 2008).

The paragraphs below discuss some of the schools' demographic and college enrollment characteristics.

Table 1. Student enrollment, income, and college readiness data.

School	Total Enrollment (2015)	Low-Income (2015)	College Readiness (2017)
City Prep South	470	85%	11%
City Prep F. South	472	82%	12%

City Prep West	412	90%	16%
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A total of 1,354 students were enrolled within the charter network during the 2015-2016 school year (see Table 1). Of that student population at each school within the network the number of low-income students enrolled was greater than 80%. The college readiness scores reported in Table 1 are from the 2016-2017 school year (data was not kept before). The college readiness number is derived from the amount of students at the school that score at-or-above a composite 21 on the ACT (American College Test). While there has been a decline in enrollment across the network (961 currently enrolled) the demographic data for the student body has not changed so the scores as reported this school year can serve as an accurate representation of the schools past performance. The average college readiness number across the city's school district is 29%.

Further, City Prep receives significant media attention every year due to 100% of its graduating classes being accepted into a 4-year college or university. Considering the demographic served, all African American Males, this statistic is often celebrated by the local and national news media. The charter network host an announcement ceremony in the middle of downtown that is inspired by college athlete signing days, where each graduating senior announces his top choice from the colleges he's been accepted to. These sorts of ceremonies provide students with a single gender and single racial experience that is unique to City Prep.

Table 2. College Enrollment Information (12 months)

Post Secondary Enrollment 12 months	City Prep South	City Prep Far South	City Prep West	District (city)	State
2015	--	80%	82%	64%	70%
2016	84%	--	81%	62%	68%
2017	82%	69%	75%	64%	70%

Table 3. College Enrollment Information (16 months)

Post Secondary Enrollment 16 months	City Prep South	City Prep Far South	City Prep West	District (City)	State
2015	--	83%	86%	68%	73%
2016	84%	--	84%	66%	71%
2017	85%	73%	75%	69%	73%

The college enrollment percentage for students graduating from the cities charters schools is 68% compared to 55% for neighborhood schools to 83% for the selective enrollment and magnet schools. Post secondary enrollment data for City Prep shows that the charter network has consistently had higher post secondary enrollment for its students than both the district and the state (see Tables 2 and 3). With such high percentages, City Prep often accounts for a disproportionately high number of African American male students enrolled in college from the city in any given year. This focus on continued education has won the network much support and is considered by many to be the networks greatest accomplishment.

As of 2017, the numbers have shown a slight decline with the City Prep numbers starting to look closer to those of both the district and the state. City Prep's plan to expand into the suburbs near the city and to other large cities have been stifled due to pushback from interest groups in those areas. City Prep lost the opportunity to expand to another major city at the last minute in lieu of a similar school being opened by another charter organization. Due to the high teacher turnover rates it is difficult to capture the perspective of teachers that have worked in the network for multiple years. The group of teachers highlighted in this project shed light on this particular charter network as well as the experience of a long-tenured charter school teacher.

As previously noted, City Prep's most recent publicity has centered on the attempt to unionize by many of its teachers. The result of that effort was, in 2016, joining the Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff (ACTS). ACTS is comprised of charter school employees that are represented by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The AFT currently represents teachers and support staff in over 150 charter schools across the country. In the past year, nearly 1000 employees at over a dozen charter schools voted for union representation.

Union representation was approved by teacher's vote in June 2015. Initially, the administration and teachers operated on an interim contract for the 2015-2016 school year. In summer of 2016, a committee of teachers (now members of the union) volunteered to negotiate with representatives from the CMO and in 2016-2017 a 2-year contract was approved. That contract spelled out, among other things, labor hours, salary guidelines, and a teacher evaluation process.

In the interview, the study participant Rosie described the interim contract. It provided the teachers with protection “from just being...fired.” She described how teachers in the past had been let go with little notice and the temporary bargaining agreement “outlined...steps of discipline.” Teachers were now required to “receive and informal written warning” in the case of any disciplinary matters. Teachers were also allowed “representation” in case they were required to “sit down at the table with their superiors.” The interim contract held until a formal bargaining agreement was laid out.

The 80-page collective bargaining agreement between the teacher union and the organization is a two-year agreement (2016-2018) (Appendix D). It formalizes the matters related to pay, workload, teacher assessment, and disciplinary procedure that the City Prep teachers had lobbied for. The contract includes pay scale that outlines minimum pay with incremental increases based on years of experience, licensure, and level of degree attained (appendix D). The teachers standard work day is set at 8.5 hours (8:15am-4:45pm). This includes a “a forty-five minute duty free lunch and preparation periods.” A formal teacher evaluation framework was also established where teachers are observed by the principal or assistant principal at least two times a school year, once per semester. A conference is to take place before and after the evaluations.

These evaluations are “forty-five minutes or the length of the class period.” Somewhat similar to how public school teachers are evaluated, teachers who are rated “unsatisfactory” in two formal observations are placed on a remediation plan. The remediation period is sixty schools days and with at least two formal observations. If the teacher does not meet the objectives they can be retained on remediation or terminated.

Any formal discipline must be done with “just cause” and follow all the appropriate steps and procedures outlined in the collective bargaining agreement. Teachers who helped design the contract were participants in this study.

Selection of Interview Participants and Interview Methodology

The selection of participants for this study followed several steps. First, an initial contact with the one teacher leader who participated in the pilot study in 2015 was conducted. This participant was asked additional questions regarding the unionization effort to obtain an updated account, as well about veteran teachers he knew at the time who were knowledgeable about the effort. (The pilot study probed this leader’s perspectives on the effort to unionize within the charter network.) This participant was considered knowledgeable and able to recommend study participants because he served as the face of the union negotiations and has appeared in the media on multiple occasions (ex. *Chicago-Sun Times* and *Huffington Post*). He was “quite familiar with the program and its environment,” having served at the school for six years and was considered one of its most esteemed teachers (Murphy, 1980, p. 78).

Based on consultation with this teacher, six teachers who were in the CMO network were approached who, like the participant in the pilot interview, were present during the union effort (2014-2015). One teacher was no longer working at the CMO during the study but was present for the union effort. Following their agreement to participate, all were asked for their preferred location for the interview, and all were interviewed during the summer.

Those who agreed to participate in the study were asked to sign a consent form

(see Appendix B) during the interview, which provided them with information regarding the purpose of the study, the time commitment for the interview, and their rights as research participants. (Human subjects' permission was also requested and granted from the university Office of Research to conduct the study.)

Each interview conducted was approximately 45 minutes-1 hour in length. Each interview was conducted, as noted, at a place of the interviewee's choosing. Interviews were conducted in the summer of 2017, following the 2015 initial (pilot) study. Each interview was recorded and verbatim transcripts were produced. Table 4 presents the characteristics of the sample of teachers interviewed.

Table 4. Pseudonyms, Campus, Subject, Grades, and Teaching Experience of Study Participants

Participant	Campus	Subject	Grade Levels	Years at City Prep	Years at Other School	Total Years Teaching
Zora Johnson	Far South	English Literature	9-10	7 years	2 years	9 years
Lucy Chu	Far South	English Literature	9-12	3.5 years	3.5 years	7 years
Rosie Menendez	South	English Literature	9-10	6 years	1 year	7 years
Lance Lewis	South	English Literature	9-12	6 years	1 year	7 years
Jamal	Far	Biological	9-12	5 years	3 years	8 years

Johnson	South & West	Science				
Miller Brewer	Far South	English Literature	10 & 12	8 years	4 years	12 years

The Interview protocol was divided into three sections-several initial questions are primarily descriptive, followed by opinion-based questions, and several comparative questions at the end. It is recognized that some of the earlier interview questions may address the topics raised in later questions; therefore, less time may be spent on later questions that have been previously addressed. Questions 1-6 in the protocol (see Appendix A) are primarily descriptive questions (grand-tour) designed to better understand the interviewees' background and personal experience within the specific charter school. The particular school(s) served as the locale and has a unique culture that I (the interviewer) will seek to better understand from the interviewees' perspective. With questions 1-6 serving as more macro questions, the interview addresses the teacher's leadership experience within the school in question 7.

Question 7, a mini-tour, seeks to better understand each interviewee's motivation in seeking leadership positions. Describing his or her perspective on being a leader to other teachers will help the interviewer understand his or her desire to participate in the union effort. Following this theme, the purpose of Question 9 is to introduce the politics behind working at a charter school to the conversation. This is crucial to the context of the interview because it challenges the interviewee to consider the decision to work at a charter school that has lacked a union since its inception. Prior to this notion, Question 8 is about the challenges within the school (locale) that sparked the union effort in the first

place. This question also serves to transition to several opinion-based questions in the protocol.

Question 9 starts to probe the informant's opinion on the general disconnect that had existed between unions and charter school teachers within the Chicago metropolitan area; question 10 asks about the process. Question 11 returns the line of questioning to the specific school that at which the interviewee teaches. His or her opinion on how the administration within the school has reacted to the union effort will be valuable to the analysis. The analysis will also be supported by several questions (12-15) that seek the interviewee's opinion, among other things, on the reaction to the labor effort of the executives at the CMO. Question 15 is the end of some of the opinion-based line of questioning and several comparative-themed questions begin with question 16. Questions 16-22 force the informant to consider the landscape of charter schools and the belief that they should exist apart without teacher unions. These questions are designed for the informant to consider whether a union is truly the answer to the teacher's consensus issues (the same that plague many other charter school teachers), advice to other charter schools, their own level of satisfaction within the school, and militant actions. The final question serves to get a better sense of how the informant believes the potential ramifications this specific union effort will have on the charter school movement as a whole.

Chapter Four

Presentation of Cases by Theme

As discussed in Chapter Three, six participants were interviewed for this study: Zora, Lucy, Rosie, Lance, Jamal, and Miller¹. Five participants were currently working as teachers in the CMO, and had professional experience in schools from before their time as leaders of the union effort. The participants were given pseudonyms. In this chapter, I will present the following from each participant: reasons for becoming a teacher, reasons to unionize focusing on teacher turnover and the lack of a sustainable teacher workload, the union effort (i.e., teacher organization), administrative pushback, and the political landscape including race, militancy and school choice.

Background: Reasons for Becoming a Teacher

In this section, I begin by exploring each participant's reasons for wanting to become a teacher. As described earlier, the sample is comprised of veteran, charter teachers (at least 6 years teaching in a charter school) with total experience teaching ranging from 7-12 years. Each participant has also spent the majority of their career working in predominantly Black, majority low-income schools. In Table 4 (Chapter Three), I provided the pseudonyms of each of the 6 participants, subject, their respective campuses, grade levels taught, years taught in the network, years taught outside of the network and their total years teaching.

While each participant cited different reasons for wanting to become a teacher,

¹ All names are pseudonyms in order to protect the anonymity of the participants.

there is some overlap as a few of them described positive experiences with their own teachers as a reason why they chose to enter the profession. I also explored the participant's perspectives on whether or not their decision to work in a charter school was intentional. Within this first theme, I grouped each participant by school: City Prep: Far South; South; and West. Within the following themes in the chapter, I grouped the participants by relevance to the theme, i.e., reasons to unionize (two aspects), the union effort itself (including facilitators and barriers), administrative pushback, and teacher militancy [make these themes match exactly to the below]. For the last two themes, administrative pushback and teacher militancy, the teachers' views were presented that appeared most relevant to the theme.

Zora Johnson (City Prep Far South). Zora Johnson, an African-American female in her early 30s, is currently in her 10th year teaching. At the time of the study she had spent 7 years teaching at City Prep Far South “after working at another charter school for 2 years.” She described her childhood experience with her mother's at-home daycare business as her earliest influence to become a teacher. “Growing up...my mom ran a daycare in our home and...I know I always loved to read I always loved to write...” while she explored other potential career avenues during college. She just kept “getting pulled back into education...and then made the decision once I graduated to go back and get my masters...in secondary English.” Her decision to work at a charter school was not intentional, “it's just what...was presented to me.”

Lucy Chu (City Prep Far South). Lucy Chu, an Asian-American female in her Late 20s at the time of the study had spent seven years teaching at charter high schools

but has since left teaching. Three and a half of those years were at City Prep far south primarily teaching “a mix of upper and lower [9-12]...literature and writing based courses.” According to Lucy, it was her “really great high school teachers” who inspired her to go into teaching. Her experience with her own English teachers is why she chose to teach the subject; as she noted, “I had really great English teachers all four years of high school.” She started working at charter high schools because “they were hiring.”

Miller Brewer (City Prep Far South). Miller Brewer, an African-American male in his early 40s was at the time of the study no longer working for City Prep and on the market for another job within K-12 education. He was recently hired to teach English at another charter school on the city’s south side. Eight of his 12 years teaching had been at City Prep Far South and he had taught “sophomores for 2 years and...seniors for 6 years.” He came into teaching because the local newspaper he had agreed to write for said “they couldn’t afford to hire me” and while doing freelance writing he started his career “teaching English writing to 7th and 8th graders” at a charter school. He started at City Prep during their 2nd year of operation and became one of their longest tenured teachers. He left the year after the union effort. The first charter school he worked for “just needed a teacher the time I was looking for work so that was more so fortuitous situation.” His decision to teach at City Prep though was influenced by his personal education history aligning with the demographic of the charter network, “I graduated Morehouse College which is a all black male institution...[City] Prep is an all black male high school.”

Rosie Menendez (City Prep South). Rosie Menendez, a Hispanic female in her early 30s, was entering her eighth year teaching, seven of those having been at City Prep South. She teaches “English...predominantly with freshman and sophomores.” During college, she said, “I was an AmeriCorps member and I worked with charter schools while I was in college too.” She had known from an early age that she wanted to be a teacher. Her initial desire was to teach kindergarten but as she progressed through her own education and gained more experience she decided to work with older students. As she shared, early on one of her own teachers suggested the profession to her. “One of my teachers there when I was in about sixth grade told me, he’s like ‘you know I think you would make a really good teacher.’” Unlike her colleagues, Rosie was averse to working in a charter school saying that at first, “I actually didn’t want to teach at a charter school to begin with.”

Lance Lewis (City Prep South). Lance Lewis, a White male in his early 30s, is currently teaching English at another charter high school in Chicago but spent 6 years teaching at City Prep South. At City Prep, he served as English department chair, taught advanced placement courses, and served as the head track and field coach. Lance described himself as “directionless” in college before he entered teaching. When approaching the job market he said, “I was incredibly naïve and ignorant and I didn’t know there was a distinction between public and charter.” It wasn’t until after he “got hired,” he explained, that he “found out that I was working in a charter school.”

Jamal Johnson (City Prep West-Jamal Johnson). Jamal Johnson, an African-American male in his mid-30s, currently serves as a vice-principal at City Prep West.

Prior to that, he spent 5 years as a science teacher at City Prep Far South. He taught each grade level (9-12th) at the high school, and has been called upon to teach science courses during certain semesters while working as an administrator. Jamal cited the inequity he saw within his own experience in education, while growing up in Florida as his initial motivation to become a teacher. As he said, "[My time] in college pushed me to education because I wanted to [create]...equity if and, when I became a teacher. "Jamal had been working at a public school in the city but cites unfavorable experiences with the union there as why he began working at City Prep. "Actually it was by chance cause I was with [Public School System] and... ironically the union was the reason I'm now teaching at a charter school."

Reasons to Unionize-- How Many Teachers We Gonna Lose This Year--Teacher Turnover

The purpose of this and the following section is to examine the main reasons why the teachers decided to join the union effort. That is, within this second theme of reasons to unionize, two sub-themes emerged: one, teacher turnover ("how many teachers are we going to lose this year?") and teacher workload. In this first section, I explore study participants' perspectives on teacher turnover. As discussed by Torres, turnover plays a large part in the work related stress experienced by charter teachers. Not only does the relative lack of job security as compared to their public school counterparts, invoke a sense of personal discomfort but causes additional worry about charter school teachers in regards to their co-workers. While issues around workload and pay, in comparison to their public school counterparts were front and center in the public discourse around the

City Prep effort to unionize, when interviewed for this study, issues around teacher turnover served as the main rallying cry for ultimately why so many of the teachers, veteran or otherwise decided to join in the effort to unionize the teachers within the charter network. Notably, below are attrition rates for teachers at each of this study's three schools, Chicago public schools, and the state as a whole (Illinois). This data illustrates the high turnover of teachers at each of the charter schools in comparison to city and state data, over 45% (see Table 5).

Table 5. Turnover Rates for the Charter Schools, City and State

City Prep South	City Prep Far South	City Prep West	Chicago Public Schools	Illinois
57.1%	58.3%	45.5%	15.2%	13.7%

Zora Johnson (City Prep Far South). Zora was entering her “seventh year” with the charter network when the union effort began. She describes her experience at that point as having “seen a lot of teachers come and go.” While “a lot of not so good teachers leave...the overall majority of people who left...left not because they were let go they left because they were frustrated.” The average number of teachers that return to City Prep South each year is 43% per the Illinois school report website report (illinoisreportcard.com). That translates to at least a 57% change in the teacher force each school year. This compares to teacher retention rates of about 85% within the city and state respectively. Union representation accounts for at least part of the higher retention rate within public schools. The teacher’s within City Prep sought union representation as a remedy for the charter networks disproportionately low teacher

retention rate.

Zora described the situation with teacher retention at City Prep as such that “you know other teachers [were] just not feeling supported by administration and making a choice to leave and leave [City Prep] but not leave teaching, and so to see that year after year-really great quality teachers leave and then end up at another school in the city.” She describes the loss of other good teachers as frustrating: “...not only was it frustrating for me as a teacher but like as a colleague and knowing that these are really great teachers who were leaving not the classroom just leaving our campus or leaving our network because they just were too frustrated with what was happening...” Zora’s main reason for joining the union as a veteran teacher is because “I wanted my part of joining the union to be about teacher retention.”

She further stated that the union effort began because the teachers at the charter network felt like they needed a voice, “[things] ...just don’t sit well or sit right with us-or whatever- and we want to have a voice...they asked me if I would be a part of it and I said of course...because again as a veteran teacher I knew that if I was connected to it people would trust that what was happening.”

She went on to describe her perceived gap between teacher quality and the administrative role in teacher retention. “You could be a great teacher, you could have great rapport with your students, their families, great test scores but if an administrator decides that they don’t want you to work there no more, guess what...you don’t work there anymore.” Her statement is a clear expression of the potential disconnect between how the teachers assessed the quality of a colleague versus the administrations

assessment of individual teacher quality. She further clarifies this stance by saying,

It's just so important that people who are doing right by their students and doing right by their network and upholding the mission of it should be kept...and we've been told on numerous occasions that that's not really what [City Prep] wants they want kind of a revolving door of teachers they don't really want veteran teachers...so...you know I mean when you look at the number of people who are veterans in the network you can tell that it's not...I think when I came back last school year and we started doing the negotiations for our first contract...I was the second most veteran person in the network in terms of teaching...and now that the most veteran person is leaving I will be coming into my tenth year as the most veteran person in the network and I think the next person after me...has maybe four or five years...so the majority of the staff...three years or under

Her lengthy statement clearly articulates that the administrative branch of the charter network did not value teacher retention as highly as many of its teacher workforce. From her perspective the reasoning behind what she calls a “revolving door of teachers” was unclear and did not seem warranted on the part of the charter network. She viewed this practice as a net detriment to the quality of education that the schools could provide to their student body.

She further describes by saying, “there was a time where we had a lot of TFA teachers and so obviously a lot of Teach for America teachers would do their two years some would do three maybe four and they would go on to the next step...and sort of their life.” The minimum requirement of two years for Teach for America (TFA) teachers has

served as a point of contention based on the perspective Zora espouses that the largely low-income, and minority student body in the schools where TFA serves would benefit from longer-serving teachers. At the time of the study, I know of one former TFA teacher in the network who would have met the minimum requirements to participate in the study, but he had recently moved on to another charter network in a different city; as a result he was unable to participate due to scheduling conflicts. She further says,

...and so they kind of catered to that population which is get a lot of TFA teachers and not get a lot of them you know wanted to make a life time commitment to teaching...which is fine and I can totally support that...but I just think that in the environment that we teach...with the young men that we teach the population that we teach that consistency is so key.

In her last statement Zora, succinctly describes the connection between teacher retention and campus culture she says, “it just becomes a running joke that, oh how many teachers we gonna lose this year.” Anecdotally, she mentions the reactions from students at the end of the school year: “even at the end of this school year kids kept asking me over and over again are you leaving are you leaving...because they’re used to it that’s become customary for them.” Comparing her own experience in high school to that of her students, she goes on to say

to me that’s just so disheartening because I remember in high school there were teachers who had been teaching for 25 years in my school...and that’s like people who had taught my sister and then taught me four years...to me that was important to me and my family but you know I understand that different strokes

with different folks...I just felt that our population it's so much more meaningful and worthwhile to them they get to see the same people they get to have consistency at least at school in their lives even if they don't have it everywhere else in their life.

She declares a direct connection between the campus culture of high teacher turnover as reinforcing the lack of consistency that might exist in a primarily, low-income school setting. For similar reasons to Zora, Brewer mentioned teacher turnover as motivation to join the union effort.

Brewer Miller (City Prep Far South). Brewer explained his frustration with turnover in the network by saying that “as an educator in Urban Prep you can be fired any moment...without...any cause, just we don't want you here anymore.” He further describes a situation within the network where the decision to fire colleagues was interpreted by the teachers as having no real rhyme or reason. In spite of the high turnover rate amongst the group, Miller became one of the longest tenured teachers within the network, “I was [one of the] two or three longest tenured teachers...I was the longest tenured classroom teacher, I seen teachers let go after a semester let go mid-semester let go after a year I seen so much... I seen teachers put in so much work and effort.”

Without what was interpreted on the part of the teachers as sufficient reason for being let go, Miller describes the network's firing practices as “demoralizing as a fellow educator.” This sentiment of demoralization expressed by Miller is important to understand because ultimately it fueled his decision to participate in the union effort. The

group of long tenured charter teachers that he is a part of all experienced at least what is the highest degree of job security within the network. In spite of this, they were still motivated to push for unionization. Their motivation could be viewed as entirely altruistic and in support of their colleagues whom they believe were unfairly pushed out of the network or could be inspired by feelings that they could be next to go if the network's firing practices were allowed to continue. Either way what appears to be the motivating factor is what many may have perceived as a constant threat to job security that is not in line with the recognized standard for teaching. Like Miller, Lucy describes a situation where the gap between the long tenured teachers perspective on the high turnover rate versus the networks lead to an impasse.

Lucy Chu (City Prep Far South). Lucy does not believe the high turnover rates are in any way beneficial to the school as a whole, saying, “we don’t have a staff culture and when we lack a staff culture you know you don’t have veterans.” She says that this lack of a school culture creates a situation where “you don’t have mentors you don’t have a path ahead of you and it’s almost like every year you have to reinvent the wheel.” The high turnover creates a lack of continuity where the potential benefit that experienced teachers might provide is lost with their presence. She also believes that the student could stand to benefit from more continuity amongst the teachers, “to serve your students and that is exhausting and I am a true believer that if we would have a staff culture of some sort I would really change our effectiveness of our students.”

Lucy sheds further light on the teacher perspectives around turnover by describing what she believes was unfair labor practices on the part of the charter network. “I was

really frustrated in that the staff wasn't equitable right- not everyone was held at the same standard, not everyone was asked or expected to work as hard as somebody else and there was a lot more we could have done to help teachers be successful." She further describes a situation where a sink or swim mentality might have influenced how the network determined what teachers would stay and what teachers would go. "It was very much like you aren't part of the good ol' boys club if you were struggling you're struggling, people kind of hand you off come summer." From her perspective, the turnover on the part of network seems to potentially have been exacerbated by the network not allowing for those teachers initially struggling sufficient time to improve. Whether or not this practice is effective in maintaining or improving any performance metrics for students is debatable. Regardless the high turnover still had a unsustainably deleterious effect on teacher morale, "it's hard to see...a team have to go through that every single year."

She also addressed her concern with teacher turnover within charter schools in general and the potential problem this might provide for continuity within a network, "[City Prep has been] open for ten years and you're still facing the same issues you start to wonder is this something that affects charter schools." Lucy elaborates on this by mentioning the potential that low teacher retention might be a pervasive problem in urban education, "you know I don't want to attribute that to this is what urban education is like it's a business issue it's a lack of retention it's a lack of accountability it's not developing and securing and maintaining your team to deliver the best product you know I think that something in charter schools." Lucy expressed that she noticed that the "revolving door" of teachers had left the school valedictorian that year with a weathered experience and

that better retention could make the school a more positive environment as a whole.

Lack of teacher retention ... It's sad to me that I'm a veteran in the building at four years... it's exhausting to start over every year... and I'm never upset when someone moves on I'm never slighted when people move on because I'm in the same boat myself but again the kids have to pay for that this last class that graduated 2017. I was talking to our valedictorian and he was casually listing the teachers he's seen come and go teachers he had as an underclassmen that he didn't have as a junior or senior ... and you know he's also a kind of kid who loves to grow loves to learn and when he was finishing his conversation he said I just don't care anymore I just want to graduate I just want to leave school and to hear someone who has so much light in him say I don't care anymore was just really upsetting especially because...we don't have a staff culture we don't have retention the school doesn't get to keep growing we are very stagnant in a lot of different ways.

Rosie continued this sentiment by mentioning how the other students within the network might be hurt by low teacher retention.

Rosie Menendez (City Prep South) Like her colleagues she pointed clearly to teacher retention as the main reason why she joined the union effort, “kind of it came down to one major issue and that was a teacher... turn-around... as I had mentioned before I went to a school both my grammar school and my high school I would go back and visit my teachers and they were all still there...” Her own experience as a student influenced how she felt about the continuity within the charter school. “It killed me that kids would

come back to the school and they would see no one they recognized” From her own perspective it was important not only to current students but graduates of the network as well to be able to have access to teachers that they recognized. She further adds to this by explaining how the high teacher turnover affected her own feelings, “it would kill me when teachers would leave in the middle of a school year... they would be there on a Friday and they would get fired or they would quit... and they wouldn’t be there Monday” She returned to the adverse effects this breakdown in teacher continuity might have on the students’ learning environment: “then students would have substitutes until the school found someone...So what damage is that putting into students?...” She reasserts her initial statement that retaining quality teachers was her main motivation for being a part of the teacher union effort, “keeping quality teachers is the main thing that made me consider being in the union movement” Rosie mentions that by her estimation there were quality teacher colleagues who were let go because of the practices that lead to low retention, “and you know I can think of some teachers that stuck out to me as like being great mentors but they’re gone... and it became kind of like a revolving door.” Lance further reinforces both Lucy and Rosie’s perspective with his own two cents on teacher turnover.

Lance Lewis (City Prep South) In line with Brewer, Lance mentions that turnover within the network is his main reason for deciding to support unionization amongst the teachers, “to me the biggest thing was teacher turnover... now that issue has two categories to it... the first is... we were losing teachers who were fired before they could get the time to blossom...” Supporting Lucy’s comments, Lance mentions teachers

within the network lack sufficient time to grow as professionals. He explains the issue as such, “we were losing teachers who were fired before they could get the time to blossom.” He describes how the unique mission of the network may have attracted teachers that could have genuinely benefited from professional development, particularly younger teachers. In reference to the charter network he says, “their mission and their urgency for that mission. Attracted a lot of people...who may have not been the best teachers...who might have been younger...but they did believe in the cause.”

He espouses that the teachers' level of effort was not matched by a system that would help them become better teachers. “They worked real hard to get better... but there wasn’t a system in place for... universal evaluation of teachers...” This turns into a critique of the organization based on a lack of clear vision for teacher development, [there was] nothing written down...like these are the things that teachers need to do...they don’t do that...it was nothing like that. Without clear assessments and guidelines it appears “as if they (teachers) were let go for mysterious circumstances.” Lance further iterates how this motivated him to join the union effort, “that failed me personally...I don’t speak on behalf of all union but why I became interested in it... that was one major major thing...lots of teachers being let go before they had time.”

Differing from his colleagues, Jamal, the only science teacher in the study, did not make specific mention to turnover, though he did comment on the fact that now that the charter network is unionized, few of the teachers present during the effort remain in the network as of the 2017-2018 school year.

Reasons to Unionize--There is No Support, It's Not Sustainable Teacher Workload

As mentioned by Torres (2016), charter school teachers may experience longer working hours than their public school counterparts which may lead to significant portion of the charter school teacher population experiencing burnout. An over-burdensome workload was mentioned along with high teacher turnover as the other major factor in inspiring the teachers at City Prep to participate in the union effort. The charter network operates on an extended school day model in order to provide its student body with more instruction time. The typical day for a high school in the network (7:45am-4:45pm) runs approximately 60-90 minutes longer than the typical day for one of the city's public high schools. These longer working hours directly attribute to the higher workload certain charter teachers' experience.

Rosie Menendez (City Prep South). Rosie presents a caveat while discussing the long working hours “[there are] long hours [and a] heavy workload...but if there is enough support then it can be sustainable.” She espouses that support can mitigate the deleterious effects of longer working hours within the charter network. She speaks directly to the breakdown she believes certain teachers experienced, “but if the work is hard [with] long hours and there is no support, it’s not sustainable. And I think that for some teachers it became unsustainable, like they were pouring themselves too much into their work without getting any kind of administrative support.” Rosie puts the onus on the administration and this perceived lack of support became central to the union negotiation process.

Lucy Chu (City Prep Far South). Lucy discusses how important the teacher's perspectives were in identifying the central issues during the negotiation process, “the

teachers who are hands on with negotiations were able to identify the issues." They were able to do so with little interference from third party organization designated to represent the charter teachers, "I don't think [the union reps] ever tried to steer us some way they would always give us contracts to look at that had been negotiated or talked about successes and failures and what they thought would work out and what didn't but ultimately it was in our hands from the three campuses who ever wanted to step up to the plate to do negotiations." The teachers who volunteered to be at the negotiating table with the charter networks representatives experienced a great deal of autonomy in the negotiation process. Their union advocates provided examples for potential contracts and guidelines based on past charter school negotiation experiences.

Lucy goes on to identify a few key areas in relation to teacher workload that created an impasse between the two negotiating parties, "our biggest obstacle were things like paid vacation time...maternity leave...we had a few struggles with scheduling...with us like having to teach more than three periods in a row and the push back was always [that] we have a limited staff...limited resources so everyone's got to pitch in so it never felt like negotiations." Through the negotiation process, the area of workload seemed to always elicit the same response for the organization's representatives. In reference to the administration's stance Lucy says, "it was the same response all the time: we just don't have the resources for what you need or for what you want as a teacher."

Zora Johnson (City Prep Far South). In reference to the initial contract, Zora said, "I think that we've had some pretty good wins for the first contract obviously it

wasn't everything that everyone wanted which just wasn't feasible for this first one."

She further adds a few of the job changes that the contract set in stone, "we've been able to change our work time come in 15 minutes later leave 15 minutes earlier...our summers are a little longer" The teachers were also able to address salary concerns for new teachers, "we have a very small salary scheduled but we have a salary scheduled for new teachers." The contract also concretized the teacher evaluation process: "there's a process now in terms of an actual process that they have to follow in terms of evaluation it can't just be I don't like you or you don't fit so we are going to get rid [you] no it's you have to prove that I didn't do my job."

Zora concludes that the changes to the schedule, compensation and assessment will allow for the teachers to "feel a little bit more comfortable" in their role. While she does not consider her own salary to have been a problem she does believe that some teachers were not getting paid enough: "I can't say for myself it was an issue...but there were definitely people who weren't being compensated...it was uneven compensation." She describes continuing to work on ensuring salaries are what the teachers consider fair is "something that we have to work on going forward."

Zora believes significant strides were made in ensuring that teachers are able to have some semblance of "a work life balance [and] not feeling that they have to be there every single day past five o'clock....[to] be considered...a good employee." In her opinion the union contract has reduced "stress [which is] is no longer there and I think it helps for people to know that I can have a life, I can be married...[and] have children." Zora summarizes the teachers new found perspective as such,

I can give to Urban Prep and...I can give to my family and it doesn't have to be one or the other it can be both I think just going forward with the contract and kind of how well it's played out this school year I'm hoping that when we get back into negotiation next November or in November excuse me for our next contract that it won't take as long as it did this first time because what we're showing or seeing is those systems are actually helping the network so I'm hoping that we can kinda get some more of those other things that we didn't get the first time around this second time around because of how well the things that we did get have worked out in our favor.

With more structure in the employment contract, those teachers that are committed to City Prep long term can feel a bit more comfortable regarding work life balance and job security. Miller, as the most veteran teacher, reiterates this need for teachers to have a work life balance.

Miller Brewer (City Prep Far South). In regards to the organizations work expectations of the teachers he said, "you can't have us working from 6 in the morning till 7 at night...[plus] extra time and mandatory things they expect you to do it is if you can't create...a personal...work life balance and you have no say if you complain about it they just fire you." Based on this perspective Miller concludes that it's only reasonable the teachers sought union representation as a remedy to their tough work conditions. He said, "educators started saying hey we can't work under these conditions, these conditions are unbearable they're unfair there're causing stress it is not allowing me to be

the best version of myself." The teachers believed that they could be better at their jobs by adding more structure to their working partnership with their charter schools.

Miller also mentioned how it was not just the City Prep teachers that had sought union representation as a solution to their work related issues. He said, "that's why a number of charter schools...secretly [began] starting unions...you can't do it openly because they'll fire you the moment you try to start a union. They'll let you go...many charter schools might let you go." Miller's point on how the teachers at City Prep began the union effort in secret due to fear of repercussions from their administrators and the charter management organization is further clarified by Rosie in her detailed explanation of how the union effort at City Prep began.

The Union Effort (Teacher Organization)

In this section, I present a summary of the union effort at City Prep through the detailed explanation of two teachers that participated in the entire effort. Rosie was a part of the process from the start and she gave a step-by-step account of how it all took place. She still serves as a teacher representative for the union at the charter network.

Rosie Menendez (City Prep South). Rosie was present at the City Prep union effort from the beginning, "Yeah so I was a part of the underground unit...so there is a small number of us... maybe like four or five of us... or less at each campus and we would have to meet...in secret... not in a cave... but we would make it unknown that we were meeting and we wouldn't talk about it" Early on she describes how they got support from a union representative on the steps to organize the teachers within the charter network. Rosie explained, "we met with a union representative who trained us how on how to be

organizers. And so once we had our organizing unit we would then split all of our buildings into groupings based off of our relationships with those teachers.”

They began by recruiting other teachers within the organization based on their personal relationships. As an established veteran Rosie took to the process, “it worked for me because I was friendly with everyone... I talked with everyone and I'm a good teacher and so I knew that teachers would hopefully trust that I was into this because I thought it was really important and that it is good for our students and that they were at least open to hear what we had to say.” Her credibility allowed for her to present the potentially controversial idea to her colleagues because the trust between them had already been established. She says, “once we were trained and we ourselves were solid in our wants and our needs.” Their experience allowed the teacher organizers to discuss the issues with their colleagues in a manner that resonated with the other teachers. “We would just have these small conversations with our colleagues and we would agitate them and then try to come back and talk to them more.” The repeated approach allowed for a comfortable recruitment process, “so for example a teacher would come into the lounge and they would be really overworked and tired... and we would sit down and talk to them and kind of just pull out what their struggles were.”

This allowed for an easy transition for the teacher organizers to present union representation as a potential solution to the teacher's problems.

“we...knew when it was time to talk about the big U word...we knew what their struggles were and we can say remember when we talked and you mentioned that...you're teaching four separate classes... you know you're teaching six to

seven periods a day so this is a problem... there is a reason why you are struggling in each class because you don't have the prep periods to prepare for them

The process of introducing the unionization as a remedy to several of the teachers core issues over an extended period was careful and thought out. It allowed for the organic collection of what the teachers needs might be and then formation of a union that could address them accordingly. It also allowed the teacher organizers to gauge who among their colleagues would potentially support the union effort and who wouldn't. "We did for like a whole semester I would say... we had conversations... we would have conversations and would kind of decide and try to make a guess... if we were to unionize who would support who wouldn't." They tactfully categorized the teachers into groups; "we had to put people in groupings... like these people would be okay with it... these people it's a hard sell." After carefully listening to the issues and counting how many of their colleagues would support the union, they revealed their intentions to unionize through a public statement. "We went public in February and after we went public... that's when it all got hairy and messy."

Though the big reveal was appropriate from the perspective of the organizers, the administration and even a few of the teachers were taken off-guard by the announcement. "There were people who were mad and felt betrayed and thought that we manipulated them." While reports might have been the teachers at City Prep wanted to unionize many amongst the ranks were still confused about or outright against unionization. To keep the effort on schedule Rosie says, "we...continued organizing the effort... trying to get people to be in favor of it... and we couldn't get [City Prep] management to acknowledge

[the effort]. From there the teacher organizers needed to forward a petition expressing the explicit desire of the teachers to unionize. “We signed basically like a petition that said we want to unionize and we had like over majority of the whole network... and the whole network signed that.” From there the petition could serve one of two purposes, “we presented it... two things could have happened...the CEO could have said okay we recognize that you want a union so you can have a union let's sit down and negotiate a contract... or they can say like no you have to go through a vote.”

The CMO subsequently pushed for a vote, as that would allow the charter leaders to express their anti-union concerns. “They said no you have to go to a vote... okay.... So we went to a vote... and we ended up winning the vote at the end of the school year [2014-2015] like in June... and then we started contracting negotiations and that took about a year and then we finally had a contract... So it was like a two-year process.”

While Rosie’s summary of the process from the perspective of a teacher organizer serves as a great frame of the whole effort, Lucy gives a different point of view. She was a pro-union teacher throughout the effort but has questioned whether the cost of unionization was too high. She describes her insecurities as a teacher and the toll she believes the effort took on all parties involved.

Lucy Chu (City Prep Far South). Lucy struggled with the transition from the initial union meetings to soliciting support from her colleagues, “when you’re in the trenches of it that sounds great but the next step was having to go to trainings so you could in so many words persuade other people to stand with you and I think that for me started to feel kind of slimy.” The secrecy of it never sat well with Lucy because of how

much was taking place behind the backs of the administrators, “I was told explicitly don’t tell your principle.” She also mentioned that specific colleagues were singled out to exclude. She was told, “don’t talk to people that might be against a union.” She also took issue with the public announcement, “it was like the week before some of our union people decided to go public and I remember pulling one aside and saying maybe we don’t need to do a press conference. Maybe we don’t need to make it a big deal down at city hall.” She favored keeping the effort in-house as opposed to politicizing the matter, “maybe we just need to tell our network and this person was like no this is the only way it’s going to make impact [is] by going public.”

With the union effort going forward at full speed Lucy’s initial reservations predicted how divisive the effort would become, “and I just did not feel good about it and at the time...everyone around me everyone I was close to was pro union...it polarized our staff to a ridiculous degree.” She eventually made the decision to confide in her principal due to her reservations about the way the union effort was progressing, “I had reached out to my principle at the time and I expressed to him...I was like I’m on this line and I’m not sure which way to go.” The administration became fully aware of the union effort at some point prior to the public announcement at city hall but the press conference made it clear how serious the teachers were about pursuing unionization in order to solve their work related grievances. Making the union effort public may have proved valuable to its success but doing so as opposed to Lucy’s preferred approach of keeping everything in-house definitely did not sit well with the administration.

Administrative Pushback (amongst the teachers there was that culture of fear)

For the remaining two themes, I discuss the perspective of the participants with most pertinent quotes on the matter. This fourth theme, administrative pushback, represented the greatest barrier to the union effort. The nature of the teachers' public announcement may have alienated the administrators within the charter network. Rosie describes a situation where the administration used whatever tactics available to sway the vote in their favor. She says, "I feel that administration wanted us to be fearful of them so we would be compliant." This characterizes the overall climate at the school because many of the teachers who had to vote were not actively involved in the union effort. Effectively a political campaign took place between the pro-union teachers and the anti-union administrators. Zora is a bit more understanding of the administrator's perspective and she explains how she believes each side of the union effort reacted to one another.

Zora Johnson (City Prep Far South). In regards to the perspective of the administration on the teachers' union effort Zora said, "I think deep down a lot of the administrators understood why we wanted it but as an administrator they had to kind of take the stand of the network." The in-school administrators (i.e. principals) had to serve as liaisons of the CMO, so the only stance available to them was anti-union. Because of the in-school opposition "it became contentious" and it had been expressed "unnecessarily so on both parts." Zora expressed that both sides of the effort, teachers and administrators, might have gone too far in supporting their side during the union effort. Zora's perspective though remained steadfast that the teachers "just wanted better outcomes for our students better outcomes for our families and I wanted us to be not just

talking about what our mission was but actually living it." The teachers' intention was to ensure that they could perform their jobs to the best of their abilities in order to best serve the demanding mission of the charter network. Zora described the union effort as being a bit of "a pissing contest so to speak between both sides...and I never wanted that to be what it was." Lucy adds a bit more to the picture of how this "pissing content" influenced the school climate during the union effort.

Lucy Chu (City Prep Far South). Lucy described the climate during the union effort as "really volatile." It had hurt the lines of communication between teachers and administrators, "it made a lot of us not want to talk to our administration I think genuinely out of fear and I didn't want to say the wrong thing." Lucy described a situation where this breakdown in communication as result of the union effort began to harm the general interactions between teachers and campus administrators. "You didn't want to get into a conversation that could turn ugly and didn't want to be steered one way or another and I think it just got in the way of much of our work." She described how the entire second semester of the 2014-2015 school year was impacted "because everyone was concerned about the union that second semester felt kind of lost because no one really wanted to talk to one another."

This led to a culture where "a lot of assumptions were made, a lot of gossiping was going and it felt rather counterproductive." Even the general weekly meetings became a battleground for the union effort, "our administration held a really nasty meeting and it was...definitely throwing dirt on the name of the union and I remember my principle saying something like the union is trying to tell our staff to not talk to its

own leadership.” The administrators had drawn a line in the sand. Lucy felt this was a reference to her candidness, “I know he was referencing the conversation I had with him and to me that was really insulting I went to him in confidence cause I was just confused as a staff member.” Lucy’s dilemma shows how difficult it must have been to find impartiality on both sides of the union effort. Her struggles are an example of how the other teachers that were indirectly involved might have felt. She did not feel well about being used as a campaign tool by the anti-union side to influence her colleagues in the impending vote to determine whether the teachers would unionize. “To hear that spun back on me really angered me then I remember seeing one of my colleagues raise his hand to ask a question and my principle walked out of the meeting on us...from there went to voting.”

With people talking “about the polarization,” the entire school process was engulfed by this political battle. Lucy further said, “even on the day of voting anonymous email accounts popped up emailing the staff about why you should vote yes why you should vote no people.” The union effort became a full blown political campaign that had taken the whole school over, similar to Fox and Wince's (1976) conception of the type of militancy termed *citizen activity* (previously described). Some “were wearing buttons in support of the union and those against the union.” Each side of the union effort ended up coming out like political parties. Lucy said, “you were starting to see like the good ol’ boys club versus the teachers who really are dedicated to what they do.”

Just like Zora, Lucy describes how she believes the CMO understood the teachers'

stance but had to remain steadfast in their anti-union stance, which the administrators believed was in the best interest of the network as a whole. “Our chief academic advisor was very open about it and I think he was open about it in the sense that...he had a job to do and he had a network to protect and he was going to do whatever he needed to do but he made it clear that he didn’t think a union was the answer and then our human resource woman was a big part of it as well and that sums it up.” The anti-union stance taken by the CMO as well as the public manner in which the teachers chose to approach the union effort forced the external political matter of charter schools versus teacher unions to manifest within City Prep. The teachers responsible for the union effort were aware of the larger political battle-taking place and had used it to their advantage.

Political Landscape (race, militancy, & school choice).

The teachers were aware that the larger political context could be used to their advantage in the union effort. Their decision to make it a public fight for their rights brought media attention that would also involve the court of public opinion. This form of teacher militancy is important to the ongoing reconciliation between charter schools and teacher unions around the country. Lance spoke most about the influence of the larger political landscape on the City Prep union effort.

Lance Lewis (City Prep South). Lance discussed the teacher’s rationale on the timing of the union effort to coincide with the mayoral race within the city, “it was an election year and it was...[Candidate A vs. Candidate B] and...we kind of felt like putting our foot on the gas because it felt like a moment for revolution.” Running along the union effort with the ticket of the mayor’s race was an excellent strategy in gauging

the court of public opinion. People within the city were already within a political mood and were open to placing the question of charter schools and teachers' unions on their docket. The city's school district serves about 384,000 students with approximately 15% of those being in charter schools. With 57,300 students in charter schools, this equates to 11% of the city's elementary students and 22% of the city's high school students (Gwynne and Moore, 2017). The city's student body is majority Hispanic at 46% with the next largest group being Black-American at 38%. The student body at City Prep is almost entirely Black and this racial dynamic did play a role in the union effort. Miller Brewer spoke about being a Black teacher participating in the union effort.

Miller Brewer (City Prep Far South). Miller said, "at first there weren't many African Americans in the union and like I said I was one of the fence." An initiation from a well-respected colleague eventually led to Miller's participation, "Bruce [whom I] have [an] incredible amount respect for him." Bruce was the subject of the pilot study, where he was interviewed for his role as the leader of the teachers' union effort. Because the effort's most vocal leaders were not Black themselves, race became a tool for the administrators to use against the union effort. From Miller's perspective he was subject to a bit of racial antagonizing due to his decision to participate in the union effort, "administrators [and an] international headquarters person [were] telling me I was selling out black people, I was selling out [because] I was joining this group that was just going to use me as a black face, that these white folks really didn't care about our black students they were just trying to come in here [and] control us. His own personal politics were used in attempt to sway his allegiance to the anti-union side. Miller said that he was

told, “as someone who is pro black...I shouldn’t be throwing my cards in with these white folks.

The majority of leadership positions in the City Prep network are held by Black men in order to mirror the student population. When the City Prep organization began, only the Far South campus was open, the teaching force was predominantly Black and male as well. As the organization grew the teaching force gradually became more diverse. The administrator’s tactics of making the union effort a Black-White issue also impacted Rosie. There was also a contingency of anti-union teachers that advanced this agenda as well.

Rosie Menendez (City Prep South). Rosie says, “there were a core group of African American teachers who kind of treated it as white teachers coming in and trying to take over the school.” This didn’t sit well with her because “I’m not white so I took offense [to] that.” There was also an element of intimidation coupled with much of the divisive rhetoric that caused a lot of emotional stress for Rosie. “One of the educators who was anti-union was there while I was there and it got so heated that I burst into tears at the table because he went from being upset about unionizing to personally attacking me as a person.” The union battle had devolved in to an environment where “we couldn’t be professionals... I remember I kept running out the room and being super upset... and he apologized later and he respects me but that’s just how it was.” This split where each side resorted to political tactics based on ad hominem attacks continued until the vote.

We were villainized very quickly...when it came to voting...we had these union buttons and stickers we would wear or we would ask everyone to support by

wearing red that day you know just to show the solidarity...this group of teachers went out to make vote no buttons and they would wear those...so it was really contentious and you know I never ever talked to students about what was going on because it is not appropriate you know.

For Rosie the strife had reached its peak when students got involved. It was perhaps inevitable considering the pro-union viewpoint that “what we were doing was hopefully going to impact them in a positive way.” The students’ overt participation became an unintended consequence and while Rosie tried to keep her students out of the “he said, she said” element of the effort she was still faced with a student asking, “why are you wearing that button?” and was forced to explain carefully “well you know the teachers right now... we’re going through some stuff it’s okay it’s not going to do anything.” In her words the student had responded, “Well Mr. so and so said he’s wearing his because he’s black and he is trying to protect the black teachers and is trying to protect...well people who aren’t wearing that it is because they are not black.”

While the teachers’ union effort had the best intentions for the students, it did not appear the teacher organizers considered that the students themselves would become a political tool for both sides of the union argument. The political nature of the union vote became the sort of contentious difference in ideas that conjured up a combative spirit amongst all the people involved. It was a life-changing process that had ramifications that would touch everyone regardless if they held a stance or not. City Prep became a place where the macro level reconciliation of charter schools and teachers’ unions was

allowed to play out in real time. The next chapter addresses comparisons between the cases, focusing on similarities and differences in the six teachers' perspectives.

Chapter Five

Summary, Case Comparison, Discussion, and Implications

Chapter One of this qualitative study provided an overview of the problem, study purpose, significance, and limitations of this study. Chapter Two provided literature revealing three areas of investigation related to 1) Teacher Unions and Charter Schools 2) Teacher burnout and Teacher turnover 3) Teacher Militancy. Chapter Three described the design and methodology of this qualitative study, including sources of data, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter Four presented the data as a series of thematic cases by examining the recurrent themes interpreted from the coding of transcripts from six interviews with six teacher organizers and subsequently presented across several themes. Each individual provided valuable insight into a teacher union effort led by several veteran teachers within one charter management organization. The six participants in the study, Lucy, Rosie, Zora, Miller, Lance, and Jamal, were all veteran teachers within the charter network during the teacher union effort and all except Jamal were pro-union organizers. Each teacher was given a pseudonym, and their backgrounds as teachers, views on teacher turnover, experiences with administrative pushback, and the political nature of the union effort were explored. This final chapter will present case comparisons that highlight the study findings, discuss findings in light of previous literature, and propose implications generated from the results of this study.

The following section presents cross-case comparisons that illustrate teachers'

perspectives on teacher turnover, teacher workload, administrative pushback, and the political nature of the union effort. The comparison initially addresses similarities amongst the cases followed by differences amongst the cases.

Case Comparison—Similarities

As noted earlier, all of the participants in the study had worked at City Prep for several years, and had been active in the effort to unionize. In addition, all of the teachers were experienced, having taught for more than 7 years. Other similarities included that for most (Zora, Lucy, Rosie and Jamal), childhood educational experiences influenced their decisions to become a teacher. Jamal, for instance, decided to become a teacher in order to address inequality. Unlike the other four participants, Miller initially wanted to be a journalist and Lance described himself as aimless until his junior year of college. None of the teachers intentionally tried to work at a charter school. Rosie did have a prior bias against working at a charter school. Most of the teachers though accepted positions at City Prep because as Lucy said, “they were hiring” (see Table 6).

The participants in this study shared several similarities in perspective about work conditions in the school, reasons to unionize, and barriers to the union effort. First, in speaking about work conditions and reasons to unionize, almost all of the participants mentioned concerns about teacher retention and workload in their schools (see Table 7). They were also able to organically flesh out that these were the main labor concerns of the teachers within the network. As Rosie said “it came down to one major issue and that was a teacher... turn-around [teacher turnover].” Similarly, Miller described a culture of teacher turn-around within the network that was “demoralizing as a fellow educator.”

These teacher organizers were all considered veteran teachers within the network and therefore experienced, with perhaps the highest level of job security of any teachers within the network. These teachers were primarily concerned about the experience of their students and colleagues.

Table 6. Comparison of Background of Teachers

	Zora	Lucy	Miller	Rosie	Lance	Jamal
Childhood/educational experience influential on decision to teach	X	X	O	X	X	O
Intentional decision to work at charter	O	O	O	O	O	O

X = present in the interview

O = not present in the interview

Table 7. Comparison of Perspectives about Reason to Unionize, Work Conditions, and Barriers to the Union Effort

	Zora	Lucy	Miller	Rosie	Lance	Jamal
Reason to Unionize. Teacher retention (how many teachers	X	X	X	X	X	O

we gonna lose this year)						
Work Conditions. Teacher workload	X	X	X	X	X	O
Barriers. Administrative pushback	X	X	O	X	O	O

X = present in the interview

O = not present in the interview

A sub-point to this general observation is that teachers at City Prep Far South seemed particularly focused on ensuring that the union would address the amount of teachers leaving the school each year. As Zora said, “I wanted my part of joining the union to be about teacher retention,” and Lucy added “we don’t have a staff culture and when we lack a staff culture [because] you know you don’t have veterans.”

Almost all (five of six--Rosie, Lance, Lucy, Miller and Zora, Table 7) appeared to agree that “how many teachers we gonna lose this year” was no longer a question they were willing to ask as the most senior teachers within the network. The five decided collectively that a teachers’ union was the best remedy to address the issue of teacher retention within the network.

Although only half of the participants mentioned overt administrative pushback, it

was clear that administration was seen as a barrier to the organizing effort (Table 7). Zora expressed that "as an administrator they had to...take the stand of the network ." The network took an anti-union stance so of course the administrators were naturally expected to follow-suit. In line with Zora's comments on the administrators within the charter network, Lucy said, "it made a lot of us not want to talk to our administration I think genuinely out of fear." A clear line in the sand was drawn between the two sides and with the balance of power favoring the administration several pro-union teachers were definitely afraid of losing their jobs during the union effort. Another similarity that Chu and Lewis mentioned that given hindsight it would have made sense to include non-teacher staff members (i.e. paraprofessionals and admin staff) within the union effort." The most glaring difference within the cases was the perspective of Jamal, who represented the only voice that opposed the teacher union effort. During the effort, Jamal was just a veteran science teacher at City Prep Far South but would later become an assistant Principal at City Prep West.

Case Comparison--Differences

The participants also differed in perspective. Jamal, the only science teacher in the study, was much more vocal and convinced than the others that the union was not a necessary component of charter school management and organization. His background was as a public school teacher, and in that context he had been pushed out because under the union culture it was "last in first out." This experience appeared to strongly influence his perspective coming into City Prep and therefore is highlighted in this section. In addition, Lucy's more pro-union perspective is highlighted as well. Although positive

about the union, Lucy remained concerned about some possible negative effects of organizing. With regard to Jamal, despite teacher turnover emerging as the most consistently mentioned motivator for unionization, now the network is unionized such that only a few of the teachers there during the union effort remain. Jamal's only comment on teacher retention is, "we have a whole new staff... only a few people remain that were here when we took the union that was being pushed so most of the people are gone... so... what I do know is that." Jamal's point that at least initially the high turnover still remains. Indeed, the teacher body that voted the union in has largely left the school, including about half of the original teacher union organizers. While Lucy did not oppose the union effort like Jamal, she agreed that the teachers hadn't gained much from the union effort.

Lucy although pro-union during the effort, decided after it was over that the results did not warrant the personal harm that had been done. Lucy was most concerned with the time the teachers had spent "mobilizing and contract signing" because "it takes you away from your work." She believes that the union effort took time away from teachers main job as educators because "you can't put the kids on hold." She was adamant about expressing the impact of adding additional stress to the charter school environment. In describing her main reason for regretting the union effort she said, "it gets so ugly and I really think it ruins...professional relationships." Her advice for other charter teachers looking to implement unions in their school was simply "don't do it." The most telling part of Lucy's exasperation was her statement in comparing how she felt before and after the union effort, "I am less satisfied." She was not only critical of the

teachers but administration as well. Neither party was able to broker the situation without resorting to personal attacks. Lucy still supported the notion that the teachers always had the best interest of their students at heart.

Discussion

This study sought to examine the perspectives of six veteran teachers within a charter network that participated in a union effort. It was based around three questions

- 1) What are study participants' descriptions of the work related issues that led them to unionize?
- 2) What are study participants' descriptions of the facilitators and challenges to the union effort?
- 3) Given this information, what steps can teacher organizers take to create conditions for successful collective bargaining in charter schools?

Working at a Charter School

Torres' (2016) study showed that teachers working within charter schools experience longer working hours than their public school counterparts. This, combined with a culture of high expectations, contributes to significant teacher burnout. Burnout can lead to higher turnover rates amongst charter teachers compared to their public school counterparts. Torres and Oluwole (2015) explain that this high turnover is often viewed by the charter management organizations as a byproduct of maintaining their high standards. While some degree of attrition is desirable due to mismatch, many charter schools experience unsustainable levels of turnover (Miron and Applegate, 2010).

Consistent with Torres and Oluwole's (2015) findings, the high teacher turnover within the City Prep Network had become status quo. As Zora said, “how many teachers are we gonna lose this year” was the question that the few remaining teachers were left asking at the end of every year. Lucy furthered this point by expressing how the lack of a veteran presence was a net detriment to the culture within the school. This impasse between the veteran teachers within the network and the network itself over turn turnover is one of the main reasons why the teachers within City Prep sought to unionize. This set of long-serving teachers experienced the highest level of job security of any teachers within the network but still sought to change the culture of their schools. The "frustrating" loss of good teachers (Zora) could reflect poor integration within the workplace for those leaving, a teacher militancy issue (Bacharach et al., 1990).

In 2010, Vasudeva and Gratik discovered that teachers who work in charter schools were looking for the increased commitment and responsibility that might come from working in a less structured or new environment. They often have the opportunity to build a school from the ground up and that gives them a sense of ownership. In the case of City Prep, the teachers who led the union effort did it with the intention of improving their network. In the case of Miller Brewer, having been the longest tenured teacher at City Prep during the union effort, his stance on unionization was one that was particularly important. He described the turnover within the network as “demoralizing”, though he never experienced the same threat to his job as many of his colleagues he still experienced the emotional toll of the high turnover. For the charter teachers in the study the turnover, while not a threat to their own jobs, perhaps presented a threat to their

overall autonomy (Torres, 2014).

The contribution of Torres (2014) was that not only may issues around autonomy effect teacher turnover but also teacher burnout. At City Prep the high turnover had contributed to the level of burnout experienced by the veteran teachers. They had felt an unfair system of teacher assessment was in place. The participant Lucy said, “the staff wasn’t equitable, right; not everyone was held at the same standard not everyone was asked or expected to work as hard.” By successfully implementing a union, the veteran teachers would be able to better deal with the role stress related to losing what they believe were qualified colleagues. They sought to re-define their networks approach to employment.

Along with the turnover, teachers felt they had no protection when it came to how much work their network expected of them. In his 2016 case study of charter schools, Torres noted that teachers could work 60 or more hours in some CMOs. Within City Prep Miller noted that times the teacher were expected to work from “6 in the morning till 7 at night.” Rosie noted that with the right “support” from the administration this sort of work could be made more manageable. Conley and You (2009) showed that role ambiguity and role overload could be predictive of a teacher’s intention to leave. The teachers at City Prep sought to mitigate the way workload was contributing to turnover by ensuring that teachers’ expectations would be more concretely understood by negotiating a collective bargaining agreement.

Torres and Oluwole (2015) expressed that some CMOs could serve as examples to other networks and other states (i.e. Green Dot in LA) in order to explore creative

ways to deal with collective bargaining (p. 523). While Lucy was pro-union she did express that she was “less satisfied” post-union than she was pre-union. She expressed optimism over the fact that it was still early but has admitted the fallout over the union effort has taken a toll. She said, “I’ve seen a lot of stress put on [the CMO], I’ve seen a lot of stress put on teachers and I don’t see the gain.”

The participant most opposed to the union was Jamal and he believed that the teachers at City Prep hadn’t gained anything in regards to autonomy after the union effort. Since joining a union, Jamal says the experience teaching is “it’s more strict... more strenuous... it’s just become that... and to me it’s less personal.” Jamal has struggled to “find the benefit” of joining the union. He explains that the new rigidity as a result of the union contract has caused unintended consequences. One change is that “there’s rules now” and “teachers get in trouble a lot.” Jamal described how prior to unionization an honor system existed where teachers were allowed days off based on trust. But the union contract brought in a “dehumanizing” standard based on “sick days.” He also noted that he believes “nothing’s changed” in regards to teacher morale now that the union contract is in place.

Jamal’s overall perspective seems to be that any teachers seeking to unionize should seriously consider the cost/benefit of “beginning to polarize the situation” within a school. Jamal is less forgiving of what Torres and Oluwole (2015) call the “cumbersome” side of labor contracts. The scholars note that despite resistance within charter schools, collective bargaining may still prove beneficial toward improving the overall job satisfaction of charter teacher. The teachers at City Prep sought to address

their own dissatisfaction by taking militant action in pursuit of union representation.

Alutto and Belasco (1973) explored the role of teacher militancy as a form of participation in school decision-making. In line with this research, the teachers at City Prep made their pursuit of union representation a militant act (utilizing the *conflict activity* form of occupational militancy, Fox & Wince, 1976) by holding a press conference at city hall. This act expanded the union effort beyond the context of the network into the court of public opinion. Alutto and Belasco touched on "the desire of growing numbers of teachers to be more active in the decision-making process within their school organizations" (p. 28). This desire to be a part of the decision-making process makes sense in relation to the "ownership" charter teachers often have in the schools they work for (Vasudeva & Gratik, 2002). While the participants in the study were evenly distributed based on gender six total (3 male, 3 female), Fox and Wince (1976) determined that male teachers were more militant.

Study participant Lance Lewis along with Bruce (pilot study participant), both men, were the public faces of the union effort. Lance explicitly mentioned the timing of the effort was meant to specifically coincide with the city's divisive mayoral race. He also gave the most detailed explanation of the early stages of the union organizing process. While these two men were the leaders that received the majority of the media attention, others like the participant Rosie, for example, were clearly highly involved in the organizational process of the City Prep union effort. This project expounds on Fox and Wince (1976) by examining a charter school as a specific educational context, which they mentioned was a limitation of their study. While their study concluded that older

teachers generally were not as militant, this group of participants was some of the most senior teachers in their charter network. There, militancy could be attributed the fact that charter teachers are younger on average than their public school counterparts (Goldring, Gray, Bitterman, 2013).

In their 1990 study Bacharach et al. contextualized two forms of militancy amongst teachers in their analysis of public school unionism. Their latter contextualization explores teacher militancy directed at the rights and responsibilities of teachers as professionals in the workplace. The urban union effort can be framed precisely within this context. Each participant expressed that teacher turnover was their main motivation for participating in the City Prep union effort, perhaps reflecting poor integration into the organizations in which teachers work (Bacharach et al., 1990). Elements of role ambiguity in relation to workload were also fleshed out as motivating factors to pursue union representation. These teachers sought to transform the labor practices of their organization from the inside and used militant means to do so. Despite the study participant Lucy's reservations about the climate created by the union effort she made it a point to explain that the teachers' main focus was always on the students:

we are all sitting here right now in negotiations because we want to be better teachers. We aren't doing this to hurt your feelings, we are doing it because we just want to have a better contract to do our jobs ... so that we can serve our students better.

The student performance data at City Prep does not show a decline in line with Hart and Sojourner's (2015) finding that student's scores are lower during the year charter teachers

transition from non-union to union status. However, Lucy does acknowledge that the unique climate created by the union effort could have distracted from the overall mission of educating students. The public nature of the union effort made it inevitable that students would get involved. Naturally, several students even chose a side in the matter. Lucy explained that “it’s still a very polarized staff and we still forget that we are there to serve students before all else.”

The response from the charter leaders validates Lucy’s assertion that employees in the organization remain “polarized.” The administration’s efforts to quash the union effort could not deter the decision of the teachers though. The City Prep teachers voted in favor of forming a union, 56 yes votes to 36 no votes. In the immediate aftermath it was determined that 15 City Prep teachers were wrongfully terminated under the new labor provisions. The CMO was forced to offer each teacher their job back and pay a sum of >\$200,000 in back pay to the wrongfully terminated teachers. This events of this union effort and this subsequent research projects offer several insights for new research on charter schools going forward, as well as insight for practitioners within the education space particularly in regard to labor negotiation.

Implications for research

This study was limited to the qualitative perspectives of a small number of teachers in one charter school network. Further research might seek to further understand the work-related perspectives of charters schools through quantitative assessment of their job satisfaction among other areas. Further study might also explore whether the union presence within a Charter Management Organization (CMO) has any impact on their

teacher retention rates. In addition, other perspectives that might be tapped in future research are those of the administration, and, given that most teachers in this study taught English Literature, those of teachers in a variety of content areas. In his 2016 study, Torres stated that more research needed to be conducted on the “conditions that promote or impede the functional growth of CMOs.” CMOs had been emboldened by their positive impact on student achievement but Torres espoused several questions considering the role of teachers within charter networks,

Are teachers satisfied with their working conditions? Are organizations and their models “churning” through their employees? Do they have an adequate supply of teachers and leaders and the means to effectively and efficiently develop new teachers?

He suggested that the status of the teacher labor force should be considered alongside student achievement to determine whether CMOs could be sustainable organizations. While this study is limited to only six participants from one CMO, it does seek to further explore these questions posed by Torres.

Only a small body of empirical research exists that explores the perspective long serving charter teachers, like the six teacher participants from City Prep represented in this study. It is important to understand how their teaching experience differs from their public school counterparts. In the case of City Prep, several veteran teacher sought collective bargaining measures as a means to address their network’s issues with workload and teacher retention. Torres and Oluwole also explored the reconciliation of charter schools and teacher unions in a 2015 study.

In the study, Torres and Oluwole (2015) found that further research could be conducted on the “perceptions of collective bargaining and the conditions affected by collective bargaining within these different charter school contexts.” By examining the teacher perspective on how the CMO reacted to their push for collective bargaining, this study sought to address Torres and Oluwole’s statement that “more research could investigate why most charter teachers and leaders neglect to engage in some form of collective bargaining.” The authors explained how this issue is often “framed as reluctance...over creating bureaucracy" (Vevea, 2011) within these networks. At least two of the teachers within this study pointed out a concern over the additional bureaucracy brought about by union representation. By pursuing union representation against their network’s wishes, it is clear that the teachers at City Prep took militant action in order to achieve their work related goals.

Bacharach et al. (1990) expounded on the existing body of research around the militant action of teachers. They defined a form of teacher militancy “directed at the rights and responsibilities of teachers as professionals in the workplace." The union effort at City Prep presented in this study through the perspective of teachers explores how teachers could seek militant action to address issues with their “rights and responsibilities.” One recommendation of these prior researchers this study sought to examine was "how individual predispositions toward militancy are translated into collective strategic choices.” Further research on teacher militancy might consider using Bacharach et al.'s measure to explore the militant feelings of teachers working in charter schools. Continuing to “examine the organizational context” of where teachers are

employed will provide further insight into finding the best conditions for these professionals to work.

Vasudeva and Gratzik (2002) explored how teachers working within charter schools are drawn to the opportunity to “build a school from the ground up.” Once these teachers are faced with the actual responsibility though they may begin to feel overwhelmed. The participant Lucy described the sense amongst the veteran teachers within the network that they were starting over every year due to the turnover, “it’s almost like every year you have to reinvent the wheel to serve your students and that is exhausting.” The unique perspective of the long tenured charter teachers that participated in this study provides a starting point for understanding how charter teachers view themselves as professionals. Torres and Weiner (2018) furthered this in their study on professionalization where they explored how teacher’s induction process and the organizational context teachers are placed in can shape how teachers reconcile themselves as professionals. They found that regardless of the context, new teachers generally struggle with the perception that teaching is a low status job. This line of research should continue to explore how teachers across different contexts define the profession. This is crucial to understand in order to mitigate the role ambiguity that might afflict charter teachers. State collected data on charter schools should continue to inform both qualitative and quantitative research.

Further quantitative work could build on Matsudaira and Patterson’s (2017) findings by continuing to explore the impact unionizing is having on student performance in charter schools across the country. Continuing to track teacher retention within charter

schools as well will also determine whether collective bargaining is an effective way to curb unsustainable practices on the part of some charter networks. This will also serve to inform charter leaders in order to paint a clearer picture of the characteristics that define a high performing charter school.

Implications for practice

Earlier research by Price (2011) suggested that charter school collective bargaining agreements were on average more flexible when compared to traditional school collective bargaining agreements. Price (2011) indicated that charter schools that create their own contracts could avoid statutes such as “last hired, first fired,” a seemingly important implication for practice. Consistent with this observation, one theme that emerges in this study is about structure versus flexibility in the contract. Teachers are responding to increased responsibility with a sense of commitment and ownership over the school; they are drawn to the opportunity to build a school from the ground up (Vasudeva & Gratzik, 2002). Charter leaders dealing with the challenge to the traditional school structure that this increased responsibility presents, desire more flexibility from union contracts than the ones present in public schools. Charter leaders want to avoid an imbalance of power in favor of the teachers. Teachers want a formal means of input. Therefore, both parties do not want to relinquish their control over school structure and thus desire flexibility in the contract.

Indeed, with a growing number of charter teachers pursuing union representation across the country, it is important that charter leaders are keeping track of the perspectives of their teachers about such tensions. Earlier, Price (2011) discussed the

potential for charter schools to create innovative collective bargaining agreements that better suit their needs. Charter leaders can further this notion and address their fear of union encroachment by keeping track of their own quantitative data on job satisfaction. It is crucial that charter leaders remain organized and data driven in order to help create a structure that is similar in many ways to that existing in public school systems. For teachers, at the center of the desire for flexibility in negotiation is the desire to get away from the exclusively student-related teacher evaluations that exists in some public schools. For their part, charter leaders need flexibility to be able to demonstrate that they have a workable rubric as a way for demonstrating the success of a school.

Charter schools and teacher unions can no longer be thought of as mutually exclusive. A promising way forward is to re-frame the relationship of teacher unions and charter schools. Union leaders originally devised charter schools to promote innovation within the education space. The contemporary charter school narrative has been characterized by the business minded individuals that operate charter organizations. A collaborative effort between these business-minded operators and traditional education professionals will go a long way toward achieving the goal of providing every student with access to a quality education.

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Appendix A--Interview Protocol

We will be conducting an interview designed to gather your unique perspective on the City Prep Teacher's Union Effort. The decision to answer each question is at your own discretion. I anticipate that the interview will take no longer than an hour to complete.

Thank you for your time.

Background

1. Tell me about your professional background. (D) [probe: what year did you start at City Prep]
2. What influenced you to become a teacher? (D)
3. Please briefly describe your teaching roles at City Prep? (probe: current work assignment) (D)
4. Why did you decide to teach at a charter school (City Prep)? (O)
5. What are the school's strengths and weaknesses? (D)

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

6. What are the teachers at your school like to work with? (D) [probe: how do you like working with the teachers at your school?]
7. What inspired you to get involved with any leadership roles you may have taken on during your tenure? (D)

Creating the Union Effort

8. What challenges influenced your decision to start/join the union effort for the teachers at City Prep? (D)
9. In the past, charter schools teachers seemed to be removed from the union effort/debate here in Chicago, why now was it time that they join it? (O)
10. Can you describe the process when teachers started to organize? (D)

Implementing the Union Effort

11. How did the administration within the school react to the teacher's union effort?
(O)
12. Since teachers have unionized, how central has the union been to your work life in the school? (O)
13. Has the union been able to identify issues important to teachers, and if so what are they? (O)
14. How did those working at the charter management organization (CMO) that manages the school appear to respond to union representation? (O)
15. Overall what have been the facilitators and challenges of this union effort at union representation at City Prep? (O)

Facilitators:

Challenges:

Conditions that Need to be in Place

16. Thinking back on the unionization effort, has it been successful? What qualities have contributed to that success? (C)
17. What advice would you give to other charter school teachers seeking to unionize its members? (C)

Perspectives on Your Work/Unions

18. I'd like to ask you about your school work environment before and after the union effort (probe: autonomy) (C)

Could you describe your school work environment before the effort?

After the effort?

19. How satisfied are you currently compared to your previous experiences in the school?

(C)

20. Some would say the point of charter schools is to exist without a union? How do you respond to that? (O)

21. What issues in your professional work life do you consider most important to you personally? (probe: In what way do retirement benefits that are offered come into your decision making?) What union-related actions would you be willing to take on behalf of those issues, if any? (O)

22. What effect if any do you think the effort here will have on the landscape of the charter school movement more generally? (C)

Appendix B. Consent Form for the Interviews

Interview

You are being asked to participate in a program of research being conducted by Justin McClinton at the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara. The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers feel about different aspects of their work environment, career, and the unionization effort.

In the interview you will find several kinds of questions about your school, work environment, and union. It should take no more than 45 minutes to complete the entire interview.

Your individual answers will be kept completely CONFIDENTIAL and anonymous. Please answer each item as frankly and honestly as possible.

Your participation is critical to the success of this project, although, of course, it is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

Thank you in advance for your participation. I would be happy to answer any questions you have about the project and can be reached at 805-xxx-xxxx or you may contact my dissertation chair, Sharon Conley at 805-xxx-xxxx.

Thank you,

Justin McClinton
Department of Education
Tele: (805) xxx-xxxx
Email:

Appendix C. Summary of Pilot Interview

The pilot interview was part of a study (McClinton, 2015) that relied on an ~~embedded, single case design (Yin, 2009) with one participant. The participant selected~~ for the study was a teacher that had been at the forefront of the union effort for the teachers employed by Urban Prep Academies, David Woo. David was selected as the primary informant because he has served as the face of the union negotiations and has appeared in the media on multiple occasions (ex. Chicago-Sun Times and Huffington Post). He was “quite familiar with the program and its environment” having served at the school for six years and is considered one of its most esteemed teachers (Murphy, 1980, p. 78). David was viewed as representing the teacher consensus well and providing a reliable perspective.

David Woo had been a teacher at City Prep-Englewood for six years. He had primarily taught English during his tenure. He attended Wheaton College and at the time of the interview was completing a Master’s in education policy and the University of Illinois in Chicago. David has been one of the most vocal representatives of the City Prep teacher’s labor union effort. He recently penned an article for the Huffington Post titled “Why My Charter School Needs Union.” In it he discusses specifics of the City Prep organization that have lead him and many others teachers to believe that they should unionize and become a part of the Chicago Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff. Some of the reasons are the allocation of resources, wages, and working conditions.

Appendix D. Excerpts From Collective Bargaining Agreement

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

BY AND BETWEEN

THE CHICAGO ALLIANCE OF CHARTER TEACHERS AND STAFF,

LOCAL 4343, IFT-AFT/AFL-CIO

AND

URBAN PREP ACADEMIES

2016-2018

**ARTICLE VII.
COMPENSATION**

7.1. **Salary.** For the 2016-2017 Academic Year, returning Bargaining Unit Members shall receive a 1.5% salary increase over their 2015-2016 Academic Year salaries. Bargaining Unit Members hired between July 1, 2016 and November 15, 2016 will receive the salary indicated on their offer letters for the 2016-2017 Academic Year. Any Bargaining Unit Member hired prior to November 15, 2016 whose salary for the 2015-2016 school year was less than provided in the salary schedule below shall be placed on the appropriate step of the schedule in accordance with his/her years of experience, level of education, and license status for the 2016-2017 Academic Year. Any such Bargaining Unit Member for whom placement on the salary schedule for 2016-2017 Academic Year would result in less than a 1.5% increase shall additionally be paid the difference between the increase by virtue of placement on the salary schedule and a 1.5% increase for the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

Bargaining Unit Members hired for the 2016-2017 Academic Year after November 15, 2016 shall receive a salary in accordance with the salary schedule below. Bargaining Unit Members on the salary schedule for the 2016-2017 Academic Year will advance from one step to the next on the first day of the 2017-2018 Academic Year. Bargaining Unit Members will receive step credit for up to 3 years of prior teaching experience upon submission to Urban Prep of the employment verification form, attached hereto as Appendix C. Lane advancement will occur after a Bargaining Unit Member submits to Urban Prep verification of attaining a master's degree from a college or university. Advancement on the basis of licensure will occur after a Bargaining Unit Member submits to Urban Prep verification of their licensure.

Non-Licensed			
STEP	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate
0	42,500	45,000	47,500
1	43,000	45,500	48,000
2	43,500	46,000	48,500
3	44,000	46,500	49,000

Licensed			
STEP	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate
0	47,500	50,000	52,500
1	48,000	50,500	53,000
2	48,500	51,000	53,500
3	49,000	51,500	54,000

7.2. **Healthcare Benefits.** For eligible Bargaining Unit Members who elect to participate in Urban Prep's health benefits plan, which plan is subject to all the terms and conditions of the plan documents, Urban Prep shall pay the amount of \$200 per month to offset the cost of each Bargaining Unit Member's insurance costs and shall pay 100% of the cost of the Bargaining Unit Member's dental insurance.

ARTICLE IX.
WORKING CONDITIONS

9.1. **Letter Of Hire And Job Description.** Urban Prep shall provide all Bargaining Unit Members a letter of hire and a job description upon employment. The letter shall state the Bargaining Unit Member's title, rate of pay, immediate supervisor and employment term (e.g., for the School Year). The job description shall provide a listing of the primary roles and responsibilities of the position. It is the Bargaining Unit Member's responsibility to review and understand the roles and responsibilities of his/her position and seek clarification from the Principal, Chiefs or his/her supervisor. All Bargaining Unit Members will be required to successfully complete a background check before employment is finalized. In order to accept an offered position, a Bargaining Unit Member must return a signed copy of the letter of hire.

9.2. **Work Year.** Bargaining Unit Members' work year shall consist of two hundred twenty (220) days, including one hundred eighty (180) days of instruction, eleven (11) days of winter break, five (5) days of spring break, nine (9) paid holidays, and fifteen (15) teacher institute/professional development days. The number of instruction and professional development days are subject to change and may be altered as necessary from year to year to meet the needs of Urban Prep provided that such alteration shall not result in the length of the school year exceeding 220 days. The length of the work year may be altered as necessary from year to year to comply with ISBE or CPS requirements.

9.3. **Work Day.** Bargaining Unit Members' standard workday is 8.5 hours and Bargaining Unit Members are expected to be on campus beginning promptly at 8:15 a.m. until 4:45 p.m. Included in the Bargaining Unit Members' standard work day is one forty-five minute duty-free lunch and preparation periods in accordance with Article 9.9 of this Agreement. In certain limited circumstances, including attendance at School Events as required by this Agreement, Bargaining Unit Members may need to attend meetings and events, including parent-teacher meetings, on campus beyond the standard work day.

Nothing herein excuses Bargaining Unit Members from being adequately prepared for their classes.

9.4. **School Events.** Each school year, Bargaining Unit Members shall attend Back-to-School Night and Parent-Teacher-Conferences. Additionally, Bargaining Unit Members shall be required to attend no more than four additional important school events, consistent with past practice, such as commencement, convocation, senior Tropaia and staff retreats. Urban Prep will provide Bargaining Unit Members with a list of the dates and times of Back-to-School Night and Parent-Teacher Conferences before the first day of student attendance and will notify Bargaining Unit Members of the dates and times of other important school events as soon as practicable. In the event that the date, time or location of any school event changes, Urban Prep will notify Bargaining Unit Members of such changes as soon as practicable.

If a Bargaining Unit Member has an unavoidable obligation or an unforeseeable and emergency situation that would prevent attendance at a scheduled event his /her attendance shall be excused, provided that the Bargaining Unit Member has provided as much notice as possible under the circumstances.

Bargaining Unit Members have certain rights under the Illinois Personnel Record Review Act to see information which is kept in their personnel file and to receive copies of documents they have signed. Current or former Bargaining Unit Members or their representative, upon making a request to the Main Office, may review certain specified personnel records at reasonable intervals. If a Bargaining Unit Member wants to inspect his/her personnel records, s/he must make a written request to the Human Resources Department to schedule an appointment to review his/her records.

ARTICLE XV.
TEACHER EVALUATION

15.1. **Purpose.** ChiACTS and Urban Prep agree with the following goals and purposes for teacher evaluation:

- a) To improve teacher performance that will lead to improved student outcomes.
- b) To engage teachers in reflection and self-assessment regarding their own performance.
- c) To provide teachers with information and guidance to inform their development.

15.2. **Orientation.** Urban Prep teachers shall be provided with an orientation session on the Urban Prep teacher evaluator rubric and the evaluation procedure during or before the first week of the school year prior to student attendance, but not later than the 5th day of student attendance, unless they are hired or transferred to the school after the 5th day. Teachers hired after the first week of the school year shall be provided with said orientation within the first week after their hiring and a copy of the teacher evaluation criteria and procedures shall be provided to every teacher.

15.3. **Evaluation Procedures.**

15.3.1. **Evaluator.** The principal and assistant principal are the official evaluators of all teachers and are responsible for issuing summative evaluation ratings. Evaluation ratings will be determined pursuant to the Teacher Evaluation Framework attached hereto as Appendix E.

15.3.2. **Formal Classroom Observations.** At least two times per school year, once per semester, all teachers will receive a formal classroom observation, lasting forty-five minutes or the length of the class period. All formal classroom observations will be preceded by a pre-observation conference and followed by a post-observation conference. Formal observations shall take place no sooner than the fourth week of a semester, and no later than two weeks prior to student final examinations.

15.3.3. Pre- and Post-Observation Conferences.

(a) Pre-observation conferences will be scheduled with no less than 48-hours notification to the teacher.

(b) Pre-observation conferences between the teacher and the evaluator will take place a minimum of two to five school days prior to the formal classroom observation. Pre-observation conferences prior to a formal classroom observation are private, interactive discussions between the evaluator and the teacher at which lesson and unit plans, portfolios of student work, student issues, resource needs, and the teacher's identification of areas in which he or she wishes to have focused feedback from the evaluator, and other professional practice issues identified by the teacher or evaluator will be discussed.

(c) Each formal observation shall take place when the instructional module discussed at the pre-conference is to be taught.

(d) Post-observation conferences between the teacher and the evaluator will take place within ten school days following an observation and are private. During the post-observation conference, the evaluator will provide the teacher feedback and copies of the "Urban Prep Academies Teacher Observation and Coaching Tool" and/or "Urban Prep Observation Rubric" the evaluator completed during the observation. Both the teacher and evaluator will sign and date the Observation Tool and Rubric document(s), and the teacher will be provided a copy. The teacher's signature indicates receipt of the document and not necessarily agreement with its contents.

15.4. **Informal Classroom Observations.** The principal or assistant principal may additionally conduct as many informal classroom observations as they deem necessary, without prior notice to the teacher. At least two informal observation must be used in the calculation of a teacher's summative evaluation rating, but no more than three informal observations may be so used. If the informal observation is to be used in the calculation of the teacher's summative rating, it must be at least fifteen minutes in duration. Informal observations may focus on evaluating only a subset of the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching Domains (as set forth in Appendix E) but Domain 4 will not be evaluated during informal observations.

The observer shall notify the teacher within two school days of the informal observation if s/he intends to use an informal observation in the calculation of a teacher's summative rating. Upon request of the teacher or at the discretion of the observer, informal classroom observations may be followed by a post-observation conference. Teacher requests should be made within five school days of the informal observation and should be submitted by email.

15.5. **Summative Ratings.** At the end of the school year, a summative evaluation rating for each teacher will be calculated by averaging each of the teacher's formal classroom observations, and up to three informal observations, for the school year. Urban Prep will

provide teachers with their summative evaluation ratings no later than their last official day of attendance. The summative evaluation rating shall be in writing, include the dates of each of the observations and conferences, comments and observation scores/feedback. The teacher and the evaluator will sign and date the summative rating document and the teacher will be provided with a copy. The teacher's signature indicates receipt of the document and not necessarily agreement with its contents.

15.6. **Remediation Plans for Unsatisfactory Performance.** A teacher who is rated as unsatisfactory after two formal observations will be placed on a remediation plan, developed by the principal or assistant principal in consultation with the teacher.

Remediation plans will specifically identify, in writing, the areas for improvement with targeted outcomes and/or activities that must be completed in order to address such areas. The remediation period shall be sixty school days, during which time the teacher will be formally observed at least twice.

If at the end of the remediation period the teacher does not meet the objectives set forth in the remediation plan, the teacher shall be deemed to have not remediated. At that point, the principal may choose to: (1) terminate the teacher or (2) extend the remediation plan period for the purpose of providing the teacher further opportunity to remediate prior to recommendation for termination.

The teacher evaluation process, and any employment decision related to teacher performance, shall be governed by this Article, not the procedures set forth in Article 16 governing progressive discipline.

ARTICLE XVI. **JUST CAUSE AND PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE**

16.1. **Just Cause.** No Bargaining Unit Member may be disciplined without just cause. Generally, discipline for a substantially similar infraction shall be progressive in nature and follow these steps:

Step one:	Verbal Warning (with e-mail follow-up)
Step two:	Written Warning
Step three:	Suspension, with or without pay OR a Final Written Warning
Step four:	Dismissal

16.2. **Skipped Steps.** In cases where a Bargaining Unit Member engages in serious misconduct, any of these steps up to step four may be skipped at the determination of Urban Prep, provided that just cause for the discipline imposed is established. Such serious misconduct may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) Unauthorized possession or concealment of a weapon;